

HECLA SANDWITH



EDWARD · UFFINGTON · VALENTINE



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HECLA SANDWITH

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By

EDWARD UFFINGTON VALENTINE

Author of

THE SHIP OF SILENCE

INDIANAPOLIS

THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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The Bobbs-Merrill Company

March

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BOOKBINDERS AND PRINTERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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JAMES LANE ALLEN
IN FRIENDSHIP THIS BOOK
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HECLA SANDWITH

BOOK I

HECLA SANDWITH

CHAPTER I

AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

In the year 1856 central Pennsylvania was yet a land of pine and hemlock. Friends of the valley, lone watchers on the height, these hoary timbers had witnessed the long Sabbath of unbroken woods; the coming of the Scotch-Irish pioneers; and the days when rude furnaces and forges one by one rose on the banks of streams to attest in clouds by day and pillars of fire by night the region's new-found wealth. These were stern days in the history of our iron manufacture, when the first charcoal hearths smoldered in homeless forest tracts; when caravans of pack-mules followed lone Indian trails or clumsy arks floated in perilous flood-time down lesser waters to the broad Susquehanna and Ohio; and later when five-mule teams toiled over rough roads across the Alleghanies.

The old open-hearth charcoal-iron furnaces worked continuously for almost twelve months. Ore, limestone and charcoal would be dumped with monotonous regularity into the trunnel-head, while twice each day and twice each night the metal that had fused would be run

out into the pig-bed—the ebony-colored sand floor of the casting-shed.

Once a year, in order that the heat-gnawed lining of the hearth might be renewed, the furnace was blown out. Instead of the customary burden, blanks of charcoal would be put in; by the evening of the third day the volatile parts of the ore and limestone had been set free, the last of the metal fused, and with the final casting the year's run of the furnace would be appreciated with traditional observances.

This April night the casting marked the yearly blow-out of the Hecla Furnace and also the retirement from active business life of the Quaker iron-master, Joshua Sandwith. With the relighting of the furnace David Sandwith, the stepson of Mr. Sandwith, would have charge of the Works.

The pines to-night, sweating the last drops of a rainy day, lined thickly the ravine where the Hecla Furnace stood; row on row they climbed the slopes to the verge of sky and there raised prophet-wise their sheeted arms of invocation. The furnace-stack, darkly sketched against the mouth of the ravine, was sowing seeds of fire on the long furrows of the gloom. The sodden sky was starred by the sparks falling in meteor showers or far-drifting on the breeze—brilliant spectacle of the blowing-out.

In the low deep casting-shed a workman with spade and hickory mold had just formed “the old sow and little pigs,” the channels in the pig-bed. From the cross-beams on long hooks hung iron torches, their small tongues lapping the draft with flaring sound. In the deep Gothic arch of stone stood the open hearth, now

banked with ashes from which the glassy orange slag had ceased to flow. The liquid cinder, sputtering like a caldron under the blast of the twyers and brimming the dam-stone, created a sullen glow. The shed was an effect in shadows. Rabbles, tapping-bars, fosses and other furnace tools lay about or were cooling in the troughs of running water. The heavy iron nippers of the crane for dragging cinder scabs dangled from the roof like an instrument of torture. The air was thrilled with the tooting of twyers, creaking of pistons and flipflap of clumsy wooden bellows.

The workmen and pensioners of the Works lounged about on benches, kegs and other inconveniences and were eying the bucket of stone-fence brought in by Low Knott, a hunchback, the only person who could be trusted not to get drunk on that delicate errand. The founder, Jerry Brown, was the host and, as arbiter of the rugged elegancies, took charge of the liquor. Scooping up a cupful he handed it to Uncle Billy Spotts:

“Drink hearty, dad, and pass the tin along.”

Uncle Billy was the toll-gate keeper and the oldest man of the county. His beard resembled a bunch of rabbit-tails and a single lock of hair bristled like an exclamation point on a pate otherwise bald and yellow as beeswax. Butts of two crooked cuspids—old guards that refused to surrender—dented his nether lip.

“Ah jedge thez plenty a knockem stiff fer the crowd,” he chirped, having noted without dissatisfaction the unprecedented quantity of grog provided. Jerry Brown’s manner conceded the compliment; he was not so unsusceptible or violent-natured as his face, purple-veined by furnace heat, indicated. Desire to do what

was handsome in honor of Mr. Sandwith's retirement and liberally welcome his successor accounted for his generosity that night.

"A black couple a days," Joe the jigger-boss suggested, as he took the "tin" from Uncle Billy.

"Ben rainen' fit to float Noar an' his ark," the toll-man answered.

"Ye couldn't juke 'tween drops ez Ah cum down the crick."

"Ah kin hear ol' rheumatiz a-cryen' in me j'int's," Joe lamented, and he looked pensively at his crutch while he adjusted the eelskin amulet on his wrist.

Archy McSwords, a teamster, stopped scrubbing his teeth with charcoal long enough to gibe confident age. He was arrayed in a frayed Mexican uniform—a prize he claimed to have secured when a volunteer under General Scott. He was wont to put this on when indulging in sprees and philanderings.

"Ah hadn't tho't to see ye hoof it so fer, Uncle Bill," he drawled.

The old man's exclamation point quivered as he retorted:

"Ah kin hoof it like any a you laddybucks. They ain't no young rooster heartier 'n I be!"

"The Lord ain't fer them ez boasts of His mercy an' loven' kindness," intoned Solomon Stitch, the dolphin-faced trunnel-head keeper. "Ye fergit yer life is ez a tale that is told."

"Ah allow to live along to bury some a you-uns. Saven' an' excepten' me dead ear an' gummen' it some they ain't no more well pusson then Billy Spotts. Ah don't nab over no yarb books ner sich, like you an' Joe, al-

though Ah does swaller a mite a swamp-root jest not ter be proud-like w'en Ah hears folks complainen' ez how they enj'ys poor health."

"Swamp-root ain't no good without grace. The Lord giveth dyspepsy an' the Lord taketh away. But a leetle wine fer the stomick's sake,"—Solomon said, as he wiped his mulberry mouth with the back of his hand.

"Ter think now a Joshua given' up the Works w'en he ain't no more'n a boy a sixty. Ah well mind the time he emigrated to these parts an' builded this here ol' farbric. A hefty young felly an' full a nub wuz Joshua in them days."

"Full a queer notions, though," the jigger-boss qualified, having in mind a galvanic battery which was one of the iron-master's hobbies.

"But kep' an eye peeled," Jerry Brown put in.

"An' allus honest in his dealments," fell from Solomon's lips like an epitaph.

Mog Pickle, head roller at the mill, who had so far been moving his mouth with the comfortable ruminations of a cow, took the quid from his cheek and sticking it on the instep of his boot began to relate how Joshua Sandwith in the old days was the first one round in the morning. No team started on the long trip to Pittsburg without being inspected personally by him: were the horses' hoofs in condition; were the wagon tires well-set; was the teamster's kit stocked with extra horse-shoes, nails, hammers, for use in case of accident? Mog recalled Joshua's method of judging men who applied for work: if a teamster boasted no rival had claimed the bells from the hames of his leader—the forfeit for being helped on the road—the iron-master

refused to hire him, saying no one could make the journey without a break-down.

"Joshua was dead agen' laziness," Mog continued. "Ef the seat a yer britches was shiny he run ye off the premises. An' he looked mighty sharp, he did, to see ef yer coat was wore from corryen' a gun."

"Yes, Joshua was mighty pertickler in his day," Uncle Billy affirmed, pulling his beard like a latch-string. "Ah jedge the noo boss ain't a-goin' to sweat hisself like his pap. He's too fond a girlen'. He'll sup sorrow 'fore his head's cold, that's wot I sez."

"Why so?" Jerry Brown said in defense of Mr. Sandwith's stepson, as he bit off an ounce of niggerhead. "Young blood hez to burn."

Whispering Willie, the flint-picker, whose soul rejoiced over the retirement of the iron-master because he frequently pinched his ears for falling asleep at his work, wheezed hoarsely:

"Ah reckon the noo boss'll run the shebang a heap sight better'n ner Ol' Trouble run it. Theeen' an' thouen' an' iron-makin' don't pull together no more."

"Wall, among ye be it, blind harpers," Mog Pickle commented. "Take me word fer it, though, they'll meb-be be wuss trouble then Ol' Trouble 'fore all 's said an' did!"

The silence that greeted this warning was interrupted by the subject of their remarks, David Sandwith, entering the shed, shaking the sparks from his Kossuth hat. He was followed by a heavily built stranger whose face had the ruddy hue of health. This companion of the young iron-master, muffled in a thick traveling-cloak of some foreign material, looked as a traveler might

who had been rudely shaken out of a comfortable doze. Richard Hallett, a young English mining expert, on his way to the neighboring village of Dunkirk, had been in a breakdown of "The Indian Girl," an inquisitorial chamber on wheels that connected Dunkirk with the outside world. Roughly wakened from slumber and impatient to reach his destination, he had left the coach some hundred yards up the highroad from the furnace and started to make the rest of the journey on foot. Passing the Works Mr. Hallett had been attracted by the spectacle of the blowing-out, and, while thus standing, gazing at the showering sparks, had been encountered by David Sandwith, on his way thither. The exchange of a few words had resulted in David's asking him to come with him to witness the last casting of the year. Hallett, whose trip to Dunkirk was for the purpose of investigating the iron and coal interests of that part of Pennsylvania, had gladly accepted the invitation.

On David's entrance in the shed, Jerry Brown, fearing the conversation which had just taken place might cause the men to give young Sandwith a cooler reception than was his due, called out with great show of heartiness:

"Here he is, men! Let's all drink to Mr. David!"

Swelled with his new importance and his natural self-confidence increased by liquor drunk in town, the new master of Hecla Furnace came forward as his workmen hailed him. Desirous of impressing the stranger whose profession he had learned, he made a speech in which he informed his employés how primitive were the methods by which the Works had hitherto been conducted. He would inaugurate a new school. He would make charcoal by chemical process. He would so reduce

the cost of manufacturing iron that no workman in Dunkirk need ever be idle, and Hecla Furnace would become more than ever the great money-maker and pride of the county.

The men shouted approval, while the founder clanged the old bell—signal that the final casting was to take place. The founder then threw his woolen skull-cap into the hearth. A general scramble ensued, each man struggling to toss another's hat into the fire but retain his own as long as possible: for all headgear must, according to tradition, pay tribute by burning to the old year's run. The men, bareheaded, watched the casting.

Jerry Brown, now adjusting his wooden face-guard, scraped away the cinder from the hearth-stone, sledged a notch in the fire-clay, and into the hole thus made rammed his heavy tapping-bar and swayed it from side to side with all the vigor of his huge frame, until through the breach issued a trickle of molten metal, which grew in gush and volume and, shooting off a cloud of hissing stars, flowed into the pig-bed. A blinding glare flooded the shed, giving ghastliness to the faces of the on-lookers, as the shed floor became a gridiron of silver and ebony. They watched the bars as the dazzling silver changed to lemon hue and through the orange colors and cherry-red to the dingy purple of hardening iron. With shovelfuls of sand the helper hastened the cooling; the wooden-shod gutterman, walking noiselessly on the yielding floor, broke the metal into lengths; the pigs still hot were piled into a corner—the last litter of the year.

Richard Hallett had watched the curious scene with interest. He had refused in the beginning to take part

in the dram-drinking and now, seeing that the proceedings threatened to take an uproarious turn for which he had no taste, bade David Sandwith and his men good night and continued on his way.

The casting had sent a richer flood of color into the night and, this slowly fading as the pig-bed cooled, left the road illumined as by the light of a thinly-veiled moon. He approached The Bank—a row of workmen's cottages by the mill-dam, perhaps a quarter of a mile over the hills. As he went along he met a troop of girls, daughters, sisters and sweethearts of the men, who were hurrying with jest and laughter to the scene of the carousings. Hallett, smiling at their gay salutes, soon reached The Bank.

In front of one of the small stone cottages he noticed a knot of women. Something within seemed to be exciting general interest. Hallett, pausing for a moment, saw through the open door of the little living-room a table on which stood a large blossoming plant and around this a number of persons were gathered. A strong over-sweet perfume wafted from the plant reached him, and he recognized that the object of admiration in the cottage was a night-blooming cereus. One of the women near him said in the nasal accents of the region:

“Yon's Aunt Christy's night-bloomeren' plant wot Archy McSwords brott her back from the Mexican War. Step in an' take a sniff, she won't charge ye nawthen'.”

Before Hallett could acknowledge this reassuring invitation the crowd at the door stood aside and there appeared on the threshold a young girl of about twenty, whose appearance showed she belonged to a station su-

perior to those about her. The striking beauty of this departing visitor, upon whose regular features and auburn hair the bright cottage lamplight fell as she paused there, made a picture the Englishman was ever to remember. The girl, saying good night to Christy Pickle, the proud owner of the rare flower, came down the steps accompanied by an old woman, evidently a family servant. As she passed out of the gate Richard Hallett, standing aside, was again impressed with her graceful beauty. She went on into the darkness, and Christy Pickle, looking after her, remarked to one of the bystanders:

“Joshua’s gal hez growed mighty good-looken’ in them two years she wuz away gitten’ school-l’arnen’. Ah don’t know ez I’d a thott it neither with that hair a hern.”

“Pity she’s so proud-like,” commented Peggy Brown, the founder’s wife.

“She ain’t a hate more stuck-up ner that fool Alpha-retta a yourn,” Christy retorted. “Proud-like er not ye kin say this fer Heckly Sandwith, if thez anything in the family to be did it’s she ez ’ll up and do it.”

Richard Hallett continued his way. Not wishing to overtake the iron-master’s daughter, he slackened his quick, energetic step. He could hear the two talking in front of him and the girl’s voice coming to him through the darkness completed the favorable impression Hecla Sandwith made on the young Englishman.

That night, on his bed at the Red Lion, Richard Hallett fell asleep curiously haunted by the perfume of Christy Pickle’s night-blooming cereus.

CHAPTER II

JEST AND YOUTHFUL JOLLITY

Meanwhile the girls whom Richard Hallett had passed on his way to Dunkirk had gained Hecla Furnace. They had patiently bided the illumined sky, all nights a far-reaching notification of a casting taking place, but on this night a signal for them to join in the celebration of the blowing-out. At the sudden scarlet dawn which the pig-bed had made, Alpharetta Brown, the founder's daughter, had started gaily forth with her companions from The Bank. On they mirthfully ran. The way was bright from the reflecting heavens; puddles and little rain-filled ruts were red as blood; the lines of trees waving their branches in the breeze were like moving hosts in the quivering light. With welcoming shouts the men, amorous from liquor, greeted the girls at the yard gate, and made ready to junket out in the air, now again star-moted with the sparks from the blast-driven charcoal.

The crowd of merrymakers encircled the new boss with hilarious antics.

"I pine, I pine," he cried, starting that kissing game.

"Who fer? who fer?" they chorused.

"Alpharetta Brown," he answered, to the irritation of her lover, Archy McSwords. Alpharetta sped into the darkness where the forfeit of the game was secured.

The coquette now entered the ring, still breathing hard and endeavoring to do up the knob of her brass-colored hair, which had become disheveled in the chase. Her roving eye considered the hopeful Archy for a moment, then with a toss of the chin she sang: "Ah pine fer Pap!" And while the teamster ripped out a Mexican War oath, Jerry Brown pursued Alpharetta and bussed her with all a lover's ardor. The founder must for the nonce have forgotten his antipathy to daughters and how he had beaten Peggy his wife on each of the twelve occasions she had obstinately furnished him girls when boys were ordered.

Low Knott, the hunchback, had fetched his fiddle, and, seated on an upturned wagon-bed, sawed away, on the worn-out strings, *Waters of Marsh Creek*, deaf to entreaty to vary the monotony of his jig. Uncle Billy Spotts recounted to fat Mog Pickle tales of the pigeon-wings he had cut in yester blow-outs; and Solomou Stitch, whom liquor made more wise, rehearsed biblical reproofs of all such frivolities.

The game ran the gamut of hilarity. The men flung their legs in air, stealing kisses from the screaming girls in disregard of rules. The showering sparks fell unheeded on their heads. The moist night brewed loamy wood odors; from the sighing evergreens came waftures of rich balsam. Now and then through breaks in the wet sky shone the dim white stars of spring.

At length Archy had his chance to pine for Alpharetta; but the stone-fence proved a handicap in the race, and his sweetheart triumphantly rejoined the others.

"Ye think ye take the garter off The Bank girls, don't ye, Miss Sorrel-Top?" he sneered.

David answered angrily, telling him to mind his manners. The game stopped, and the men gathered around the two, seeing that a fight was imminent. Some of them suspected that Archy McSwords had good reason to be jealous of Dave, with his taste for what Uncle Billy Spotts had called "girlen'." Old Mog Pickle remarked admiringly to Dave: "Even ef ye ain't Joshua's own son ye hev his spunk. Joshua wouldn't take no sass from no'un and Ah mind the time when he could 'a' licked any man from the furnace to the Meeten' House."

Dave, his excitement mounting, and desirous of impressing the girls, exclaimed: "I'll show who's boss here!"

Archy pulled off his jacket, the historic jacket stripped from a fallen Mexican foe, and began flapping his arms and crowing out like a game cock: "Phil Hicks—the boiler—boom!" as a challenge.

"Come on, Archy!" cried Dave.

They closed. Both were too drunk to know what they were about, and the men standing around were in no condition to insist on prize-fighting rules. All followed the struggle with lively interest, for it was traditional among the iron furnaces that no master could manage his men without having first proved his physical superiority.

Two rounds were fought out. Dave had a bruised cheek, and Archy's lip spurted a bloody stream. The rivals were starting on a final round when out of the darkness came a shrill voice:

"Stop that fighten'!"

The command caused as much consternation as the descent of Moses among the worshipers of the golden

calf. The girls took to flight, scurrying up the ravine like a covey of partridges. Some of the men made shift to appear indifferent bystanders: several sought the seclusion of the casting-shed; and Jerry Brown placed himself between the combatants and began loudly talking in a hastily-assumed rôle of peace-maker.

"Stop that fighten'!" came the voice in a shriller key; and Christy Pickle, Mog's termagant wife, who had hastily abandoned her night-blooming cereus when she heard of the scandalous doings at the furnace, pushed her way through the crowd, the stride of her lean legs cutting her rusty gown in sharp lines.

"Boys, boys, ye otten to quarrel. Ye know 'tain't right," the founder continued in tones of fervent entreaty.

"Ah was tellen' 'em not to git to fighten', Aunt Christy," he said, as the irate old woman, no respecter of persons, proceeded to belabor the culprit's back.

"Jerry Brown, yer a pretty pusson to talk peaceable, with Peggy black and blue from the last beaten' ye giv' her. Git home with that fool rig a yourn," she ordered Archy McSwords. And then to the young iron-master: "I'm ashamed at ye, Dave Sandwith!" Next her eye caught Uncle Billy Spotts. "Ye poor wuthless leaven's of a man!" she shrilled. "Ye otta to be underground 'stead a-setten' there with Solomon Stitch ez wuz shouten' Glory no more n'r last week. No wonder the Lord afflicts sech a backsliden' specimen. Off with the whole kit an' boodle of ye, er"—and she paused to give her words awful weight—"Ah wun't lay out a single corpse a ye, mind wot Ah sez!"

At this final threat of The Bank undertaker, the men

began to move off awkwardly in twos and threes, and Christy, striding over to her spouse, who had listened unconcernedly to his wife's tirade, bore him off on his rolling fat legs.

Within the casting-shed the slag continued to ooze forth from the hearth, making a great red puddle on the black sand. Solomon Stitch sat on in his seat on the cinder-heap, a maudlin melancholy figure in the silent night. From time to time his chin feebly nodded as if to affirm the somber thoughts within him. The trunnel-head keeper was brooding over his sins. At length one of the showering sparks dropped at his feet. He looked at this pensively, then raised his eyes to the sky overhead, the words of Job occurring to his mind. Job, like himself, had been chastened of the Lord.

"Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust," he muttered, *"neither doth trouble spring out o' the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."*

CHAPTER III

HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE FIRE KINDLETH!

Joshua Sandwith's family coach rolled on its way to Hecla Furnace, which was to be relighted that Sunday morning. The day was full of nature's moral calm. Overhead continents of cloud hung motionless in the deep cobalt air. The pines, candled with the sprouts of May, were like wayside shrines, and from their sun-soaked needles rose the incense of balsam. The coach, pulled by two well-fed cobs known as "the blue duns," caught the dazzle of the day as it bowled along the shady pike, the wheels cutting black cinder-beds in which lumps of furnace-slag gleamed like turquoise.

The coach was a battered old vehicle of substantial build, swung high on leathern thorough-braces, with a huge brake such as the hill country demanded. Faded floral pieces adorned its yellow sides and the swelling rear panel had an empty pistol-case, reached from within by a sliding door. There was, in truth, no finer vehicle in the county.

Noah Jackson, a grizzled negro with a wen on his forehead, sat on the box driving the horses with eccentric jerks of the reins. He had recently escaped from slavery and, finding Mr. Sandwith's home a comfortable station of the Underground Railroad, had journeyed no

farther. His new master had labored to make him a Quaker, but, failing in this, contented himself with clothing his body in Quaker dress—one of his cast-off shadbelly coats, and a broad-brimmed beaver, which Noah wore on the back of his head. Beside him was a round pink-faced German, by name Karl, one of the iron-master's numerous household protégés. Within the coach was Mr. Sandwith himself, a vigorous under-sized figure with a sharp mouth, bilious skin and curly wig, his daughter Hecla, and Jervis, a child of five.

The green satin curtains had been pushed aside from the lowered windows. Hecla, who had just returned from boarding-school, was facing her father, one hand resting in the fringed armstrap of the coach, as she watched the familiar scenery. She had on a ruffled silk gown of dark blue, a white-plumed Leghorn bonnet, and from her shoulders slipped a narrow white shawl "worn nicely," as *Godey's Lady's Book* strictly enjoined. Her long snowy veil was thrown back over her bonnet and only a short one softened the upper portion of her face. Through this could be seen the mahogany shadow of her hair, the gray violet-ringed eyes, the fine lashes of which made a red-gold mist on the lids.

Hecla's worldly elegance was the envy of Dunkirk girls and a source of censorious comment on the part of her Quaker uncles and aunts. Hecla dressed as she chose, sharing her father's indifference to family opinion. She was accused of having persuaded Mr. Sandwith into acquiring the mundane "pleasure carriage" they were now riding in, and also of being the cause of a little spinet's occupying a shamelessly conspicuous

place in the parlors at Burnham, Mr. Sandwith's country place. The spinet was famous in family annals. It had occasioned the great quarrel between the iron-master and his brother Pentecost, which was of many years' standing. Hearing of the meditated indulgence of Joshua's, Pentecost had gone to Burnham to protest.

"When the spinet enters thy house thy brother ceases to do so," he had said.

"As thee pleases, Pentecost," had been the answer.

The spinet arrived at Burnham and Pentecost Sandwith kept his vow.

Family dissatisfaction with Joshua Sandwith and his ways began at an early day when the iron-master married, despite his religious prejudices, a lady whose Hamilton strain was like Passover blood on the lintels of Dunkirk: a guaranty of narrow Presbyterian respectability. This delicate woman from whom Hecla inherited her beauty was a widow with three children, Lucia, David and Harmony, who had adopted their stepfather's name of Sandwith. Mrs. Sandwith had, as the result of her husband's hectoring, taken her seat in the Sandwiths' private Meeting House with other members of the Sandwith stock. The Quaker clannishness of the latter raised an insuperable barrier to their acceptance of the half-convert. This grievance of Joshua Sandwith's marrying "out of Meeting" was only one of a long train of offenses against family ideals. Where his brothers preserved a frugal plainness in their households, he indulged amply in the good things of life. The resentment with which this perpetual interference of his kin was met strengthened an alienation that rested lightly on the iron-master's conscience.

The first fruit of Joshua Sandwith's union was a daughter, Hecla, whom he called after his furnace in whimsical reversal of the custom among iron-masters of Pennsylvania of naming their furnaces for female members of their families. Such choice of prænomens was regarded as one proof more of his eccentric independence of Quakerism. Quaker forenames, curious as they were, seldom departed from what was odd in biblical nomenclature: and Hecla was, according to one of the girl's aunts, a "heathen" name.

There could not have been born to Mr. Sandwith a daughter better adapted to his tastes and temperament. Self-controlled by nature, Hecla was able to adjust herself perfectly to his exacting character. Rich living, showing in the dull dye of his complexion, had played havoc with his nerves; his nature vibrated with discords and contradictory moods; and into the governance of his children entered an odd mixture of severity and laxity. Hecla as a pinafore maid had often had her ears—they were particularly pretty ones—pinched for mistaking the f's and s's in the "Verily, I say unto you" of her antique lesson-book—William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*. Lucia, with streaming eyes, was compelled to swallow the unwelcome luxury of oysters. David would have his pony ordered back to the stable that he might be schooled early in life's disappointments. When the children met with accidents at play Mr. Sandwith first chastised them out of nervous solicitude, then solaced them with pocket-pieces. These small martyrdoms developed in Lucia and David rebellion and arts of circumvention, and Hecla's defense of her father at such times had in their eyes all the iniquity of prig-

gishness. This sensitive partizanship on all occasions expressed the intensity of a leading trait. Hecla's affection for Mr. Sandwith was unbounded. Such indeed was her reverence and pride that she absorbed most of his prejudices and views.

Mr. Sandwith, finding his daughter a congenial companion, learned to lean on her rather than on his wife who, weighed down by heroic housekeeping, faded to a shadow in the household. Her death from premature child-birth caused by a shock of lightning while out driving with her daughter, then a girl of fifteen, was Hecla's first great sorrow. Hecla had never forgotten the horror of that moment: the frightened horses, her mother's cry of terror for her unborn child; and then the dreadful hours spent at the farm-house, the suspense of waiting for her father, the doctor's delay, Mrs. Sandwith's passing in the cold dismal dawn and little Jervis, barely alive, wailing in the farm-wife's arms. To the young girl this occurrence made a lasting, vital impression. Lightning became one of the terrors of her imagination; and over the sanctity of birth, over marriage itself, the tragedy spread a sable wing. The shock of this sudden realization of life's fatalities had left its sad imprint on her face and produced a morbid reserve of character in respect to marriage. The tragedy had likewise its maturing effect. She filled her mother's place in the household—a place which it had been always her instinct to assume. Taking on her young shoulders family responsibilities, she watched over her father with anxiety and considered her brothers' and sisters' interests before her own. Love prompted self-sacrifice and increased her high sense of

filial duty; but in the girl's soul dwelt also, unrecognized, a disposition to rule.

As the coach rolled on Hecla continued to look out of the window with brooding eyes and an habitual half-melancholy line of the lips until interrupted by her father. His daughter's silent thoughtful moods aroused in him ever a querulous solieitude; but to-day her silence inspired in Mr. Sandwith a certain uneasiness about himself; for he suspected that Hecla dwelt on his ill health. The old iron-master made light of the internal tumor which had been the cause of his retirement from business; yet the thought that his daughter took the trouble so seriously made him nervous. She turned her face to him at the sound of his voice with a hastily summoned smile, which reassured her father and put him again quite at his ease. He screwed his refractory brown wig into place, put on his beaver, which he had removed to wipe his brows, and with a satisfied half-grunt of good humor slipped a bit of tobacco between his lips. As he did so two distinctive wrinkles cut deep into his cheek, parenthesizing his angular mouth.

"Remember, father, thee mustn't chew in meeting."

"It's the toothache, honey."

Hecla gave her father another devoted smile; the iron-master was always forgetting he had only artificial teeth, that produced the slight bur in his speech.

They were now passing Mr. Sandwith's forge and rolling-mill. Along the road stood whitewashed mule stables stone-built, the office and supply store—a long one-story building like a lock-up—and overlooking these, against a background of woods, a sober-appearing limestone mansion with deep walled-in lawn,

reached from the road by a flight of flag steps. This was the former home of the Sandwiths, erected by Hecla's grandmother when, seventy years of age, she had ridden with her three sons into the heart of the Pennsylvania wilderness to settle there. It was at present, much to Hecla's discontent, Mrs. Matilda Littlepage's boarding-house. Mr. Sandwith's clerks and other employés boarded there and his stepson Dave had also recently made it his abode to be near the Works.

"Father," Hecla suggested, "shall we not stop for David?"

"Thy brother should be at the furnace waiting for us, daughter."

"Suppose he hasn't started?"

"Let young men use their legs."

After a moment of thought Hecla said again:

"Does thee think David is comfortable with Mrs. Littlepage?"

"I fear he is."

"Thee doesn't wish David to be uncomfortable, father!"

"Thee spoils thy brother, Hecla," Mr. Sandwith rejoined testily. "Dave is too fond of his ease. A young man lazy makes an old man needy."

"But does thee think Mrs. Littlepage's boarders are fit company for him?"

"Dave has no time to pick his company. The less he has the better."

This arrangement of David's boarding at Mrs. Littlepage's instead of being at home had been made while Hecla was absent at school. Town gossip insinuated that Dave found the change very agreeable be-

cause of Clover Littlepage, the pretty daughter of old Mrs. Littlepage, a semi-paralytic, who kept the boarding-house. Hecla had heard from her cousin Hetty Waln of this gossip, but she had prudently not told her father. After a pause she inquired: "What sort of girl is Clover Littlepage, father?"

"A worthy young person, who teaches The Bank school."

"Is she pretty?" Hecla asked anxiously.

"Hecla, thee worries too much over thy brother!"

"There is no need to worry," she met this quickly. Hecla never admitted family concern however much she felt it. She always defended her brother from Mr. Sandwith's criticism as zealously as she defended Mr. Sandwith from Dave's carpings and complaints.

Her eyes now rested on her small brother Jervis, who, in roundabout and big-visored cap, sat contentedly munching "meeting seed" which Molly Tucker, the family seamstress, had given him as entertainment on the drive. Jervis had won the nickname of Little Pitcher through a grave habit of listening to his elders' talk. It seemed to Hecla, as she gazed at him, that while she had been away Little Pitcher had grown more big-eyed and sober and unlike other children. He was a constant reminder to Hecla of her mother and the tragedy of his birth. Could the shadow of this have fallen on his life?

"What is thee thinking about, Jervis?" she asked.

"Jervis is thinking about when his father was a little boy," the child replied, speaking after his odd habit in the third person, as if he contemplated Jervis at arm's length.

"That was a long time ago, my son," Mr. Sandwith remarked; "more than half a hundred years."

"Can thee remember as long as that?"

"Of course father can; he has a good memory, little brother."

The child solemnly considered. "Jervis has not a good memory," he commented; "he can not remember half a hundred years."

"What a strange little Jervis he is!" Hecla smiled, patting his cheek. "Isn't thee proud thee is going to light father's furnace?"

The coach had reached The Bank with its small homes of surface stone standing on the rolling-mill dam, homes from whose occupants Mr. Sandwith seldom exacted rent. The houses had a few feet of front yard and small hooded doorways, over which in summer-time Dutchman's pipe and pea-vines clambered. From the near-by slope of hill, where the wooden chapel of the Evangelical Brotherhood was hidden by pine trees, a cracked bell was pealing. At the foot of the path leading thither a flat black-garbed figure waited for the coach to draw near. It was Christy Pickle, virtuously arrested on her way to church, a half-hour before service, at the sight of Mr. Sandwith in his gaily-painted "pleasure carriage." Christy's sharp nose and chin, obtruding from a rusty scoop, bespoke the old woman's rigid righteousness, befitting the day, and her skinny hand grasped a huge hymn-book.

"Joshua," she shrilled in the voice of a raven with a split tongue, "I am ashamed at ye breakin' the Lord's holy Sabbath Day a-riden' out in yer corriage an' all The Bank folks waitin' round to see the furnace started

ez ott to be preparen' ther sinful souls fer wot the pastor hez to say. Sich doecn's ain't right an' thez no good a-goan' to come out a it!"

"Thee knows, Christy," Mr. Sandwith answered mildly from the coach window, "the furnace is always lighted on First Day for good luck. The better the day, the better the deed."

"I don't keer whether they be ner been't luck in it. *I sez it ain't right and otta to be stopped!*" And Christy, her mind delivered and her hand more tightly clasping her hymn-book, mounted the hill like a Cummæan Sibyl with fierce long strides. She left Mr. Sandwith chuckling with amusement.

"Father," Hecla said indignantly as the coach proceeded again on its way, "how can thee let Christy Pickle speak to thee so?"

"It's only her way, honey," said her father. "There isn't a better, kinder-hearted woman in the world than Christy, in spite of her sharp tongue. The Works couldn't be run without Christy Pickle to keep the men in order."

"I wish I didn't dislike her so much,"—and Hecla sighed over her inability to share her father's fondness for Mog's domineering wife. Hecla's grandmother, Hannah Sandwith, had taken Christy when a young girl from the House of the Magdalene in Philadelphia and had brought her to Dunkirk. There she had married Mog Pickle, head roller at the mill, and devoted her life to doing good in her own ill fashion: nursing the sick, laying out the dead and keeping watch over the virtue of The Bank girls and caring for their unwarranted offspring.

Hecla Furnace, bathed in the pleasant May sunshine, showed here and there through its grime the old-rose of its sandstone. Nature had partly made its own this monument to the industry of Pennsylvania's pioneer times. Moss colored to emerald green the mortar between its rough irregular blocks and streaked bridge-house beam and roof of casting-shed. Around the base of the open stone-stack, grass and fern seed sown from neighborly slopes had found nurturing crevice. The flameless furnace suggested a half-ruined watch tower, with its shaky incline to the trunnel-head of the tower's drawbridge. Over the scale-house, not far away, crawled an aged grape-vine, its fresh spring-touched tendrils wreathing the iron bell that announced the arrival of ore-laden wagons from the mine banks. The stock-yard was flanked by charcoal sheds: long low structures blackened to ebony by coal-dust, with gloomy interiors on which great bars of sunlight fell from the clearstory. The spot drowsed to the hymning of hemlocks, which threw the glen into green twilight. The ear caught the heavy splash of bucket wheel fed by flume or forebay, fern-tufted and leaking in silver spurts, that ran along the hillside under drooping boughs.

The Bank folk, as Christy had indignantly stated, were gathered to witness the relighting of the furnace: the workmen paying tribute to the Sabbath by extra ablutions and clean collarless shirts; the women by their best calicoes and sunbonnets. The latter stared with unsparing curiosity at Hecla, taking in every detail of her costume. Alpharetta Brown, Archy Mc-Swords' coquettish sweetheart, enviously whispered to the other girls that the iron-master's daughter had a

proud air; and her mother, Peggy, disfigured from the founder's last beating, remarked that little Jervis looked like "an early death." Hecla caught the latter comment and with a protective gesture drew the child to her side.

"How cruel their tongues are!" she thought as she gave Peggy an indignant glance.

Mr. Sandwith, with a cheery "How does thee do?" cast a quick eye around him. "Where is my son David?" he demanded of Jerry Brown, whose apoplectic countenance was more purpled than usual from ceremonial scrubbing.

"Hain't here yit," the reply was, "but like ez not he's the next thing to it." Then at the old iron-master's exclamation of impatience: "It ain't exactly time fer the lighten'."

Mr. Sandwith at once pulled out his heavy gold repeater.

"It is ten o'clock."

"Mebbe yer watch is fast."

"Jerry, thee knows I always have the correct time!"

The founder, anticipating trouble from Mr. Sandwith's love of punctuality, sought a pretext to gain grace for his new employer. "Lemme show the buster ol' Tippecanoe," he said, looking at Little Pitcher with ferocious amiability; "he otta to be pleased like to see ye, sonny, considerin' yer goen' to light Heckly an' give him a chancet to earn his feed." The aged jackass whose mission in life was to tug ore and charcoal in low-wheeled tipcarts to the trunnel-head was wandering about the stockyard. The child shrank from Jerry's grinning visage.

"It's time to start the furnace," broke in Mr. Sandwith in his firm tones. "As my son David is pleased not to be here at the appointed hour the lighting shall be done without him. Proceed to business, Jerry!"

"Young men ain't wot they useter was w'en we-uns was young, air they, Joshua?" Uncle Billy piped. "Well now, ef it ain't a sight fer sore eyes to see Heckly ez Ah hain't seed sence she was no higher ner a pint a cider. You've up and growed, hain't ye, sis?" And the patriarch's lips flattened on his two yellow tusks in a smile of admiration at the girl's bloom.

"Father, David will be here presently," Hecla whispered. "Do please wait; he'll be so disappointed."

"The disappointment will be a lesson to him then," Mr. Sandwith tartly returned. "Come, my son, take the torch like a little man and do what Jerry Brown bids thee."

But Little Pitcher's grasp only tightened on his sister's gown and his eyes stared in dread at the smoking splinter of rich pine in the founder's hand.

"Come, come!" his father said sharply. "My son refuse to do as he is told!"

Mr. Sandwith, losing his temper at the child's obstinacy, threatened to chastise him. Hecla and the German entreated Jervis to no purpose. The faces about them grew grave: the workmen superstitiously interpreted the child's refusal as ill-omen. Solomon Stitch shook a gloomy head. "*Out of the mouths of babes an' sucklen's,*" he began, then stopped in doubt of the application of the text, since Little Pitcher had not uttered a sound. Solomon saw affliction somewhere; he was not sure where.

Then Mog Pickle removed his quid that he might give free utterance to a suggestion calculated to restore peace.

"Joshua," he said, "why don't ye git Heckly to start up ol' Money Maker? Ah jedge thez more luck in her lighten' the hearth then ef you go an' baste the bub into doen' it. Hain't Heckly named arter the ol' far-bric? An' ef they ain't luck in given' her the torch, then they ain't luck in nawthen'."

The gallant proposition met with some approving murmurs. Whispering Willie, the flint-picker, his eyes mooning his old master's daughter, his thumbs stuck under his gallowses, seconded the suggestion by strange contortions of body and hoarse breathings of his open mouth.

"Light the furnace, Hecla," Mr. Sandwith fretfully conceded. "Time is being wasted. *A slothful son and a stubborn child—*"

Hecla took the torch and looked consolingly at Jervis. "Let go my skirt, little brother," she said. "I am going to light the furnace in your name."

The founder had drawn forward Low Knott, the hunchback, whose face wore a look of pompous satisfaction. "Jest pass yer hand oncet over Low Knott's hump, sis," Jerry urged. "He's allus mighty glad to accommodate an' et'll mebbe take off any hex they be on this here occasion."

Hecla hesitated to touch the back Low Knott ceremoniously presented, seeking counsel from her father's face. He nodded, and the girl laid her fingers gently on the hump.

"Ah didn't feel nawthen'," the fiddler grunted.

"Rub it again oncet," Jerry Brown commanded; and Hecla hastily repeated the act.

All eyes were fixed upon her as she made her way to the hearth. She carried the red smoking torch like a priestess of spring. Shafts of sunlight striking through the loosely-boarded shed checkered her path. She moved with embarrassed grace, conscious of the conspicuous rôle she had not filled since childhood days. The hearth, cleared of its banked-up sand and cinder, was stuffed with shavings and charcoal brands. Over it hung an old horseshoe: kismet of many years' standing. She thrust the dripping splinter into the furnace mouth. There was a sudden leap of flames, a loud roaring sound as the blast fanned the blaze. The workmen shouted:

"She's caught! Hurrah fer ol' Money Maker!" The founder shook the girl's hands with his horny big-knuckled ones, and Hecla joined her father amid a murmur which expressed the feeling that the furnace had been properly propitiated.

On their way from the furnace to the Meeting House Hecla sat in silence, aware that a word would draw as from a cloud her father's anger. They had driven some distance down the road, when Mr. Sandwith, whose head had been impatiently thrust out of the window, espied his son coming. Dave was walking along in a leisurely way, looking down at his figure—Mr. Sandwith called it "admiring his shadow." As a matter of truth Dave was inspecting the fit of his new clothes. He had had a night with friends, drinking his success as iron-master, and a morning headache had called forth the sympathy of Mrs. Littlepage and her daughter Clover:

he had lingered too long to hear words gratifying to the importance of a young man.

"A pretty time for thee to be sauntering along!" Mr. Sandwith burst forth when the carriage had reached his stepson. But David had his excuses already manufactured and he interrupted the iron-master's censure:

"I couldn't help it, father. Archy McSwords called me down to the stables to see one of the mules bled for the blind staggers. I think you might have given me a little more time," in a grieved voice.

"More time!" was the retort. "Time was made for fools!" Then with quick interest: "Which mule had to be bled?"

"Rube," David replied with the readiness of the accomplished liar.

The iron-master believed in the truthfulness of his stepson. Not to lie was an integral part of his own Quaker character: he told the truth, as he was fond of asserting, "to his own hurt." He had dealt severely with his children's small deceits of infancy. They were cautioned against making promises they did not purpose keeping. "Break thy leg sooner than thy word," was Mr. Sandwith's manner of putting it. Knowing his own integrity, he took the integrity of his family for granted. Hecla had tried to copy her father in truth-telling and promise-keeping, proud of the Sandwith reputation for conscientious honesty; but David was of a different sort. He had early learned to impose on the iron-master's credulity. Seated on the edge of Mr. Sandwith's bed, after an evening of young men's follies, he would pour out apocryphal versions of how he spent his time.

Joshua Sandwith lent an attentive ear to David's tale of Archy McSwords and the stables. The fault of the son was forgotten in the illness of the mule; a lack of virtue in a lack of health. It was with all the zeal of a veterinary surgeon that he questioned Dave in his rapid lisping tones. Hecla, relieved, yet fearing the subject of her brother's transgression was only set aside for a season, rose from her seat, saying she would like to walk the rest of the way to Meeting if David would accompany her.

"How could you be late?" she cried reproachfully, as the coach rolled ponderously off with Spot, the coach-dog, trotting behind. "You know how punctual father is and how vexed he gets at delays. The doctor particularly urged that he be saved from excitement, and I think, Dave, you might have shown more consideration!"

"If you got out of your carriage to lecture me you had better have kept your seat," her brother returned. Then, in amends for his rudeness, he added: "Thee is looking thy best to-day, Hecla," using the plain speech they occasionally adopted toward each other.

"Thank thee, Dave," Hecla smiled. Then she added: "Jervis refused to light the furnace, and I had to take his place."

"Well, what if you did?"

"I feared you would regard it as an ill omen."

"Hecla, you are as bad as Solomon Stitch, with your superstitions and forebodings," he laughed.

"It didn't worry me, Dave, but you know father believes in luck."

“Then that settles it,” he said in mock despair. “The furnace is doomed and ruin will come to us all!”

They walked on, David telling Hecla of his business schemes. A final bend of the shady pike brought them in sight of the old family Meeting House.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOVING OF THE SPIRIT

The Sandwith Meeting House stood a biscuit-toss from the turnpike, on the edge of the county town of Dunkirk, near which Joshua Sandwith lived. Behind it abruptly rose a hill, its top crowned by the town Academy. The classic edifice, reached by meandering steps cut in the rock, overlooked Dunkirk. In selecting this fine site of learning one thing had been neglected—the need of playgrounds for the satchel-laden youth, who daily toiled up the town's acropolis to the chime of the old cracked bell. At recess hour the children looked longingly at the spacious yard of the Meeting House, surrounded by its high stone wall, with the iron wicket kept vigilantly locked by the gray-haired sexton, Jesse Gallespie. The trustees of the Academy coveted the Sandwith property as Ahab coveted the vineyard of Naboth and had on several occasions made tempting offers for its purchase.

The Meeting House was a modest little building, looking much like a one-story cottage. It was built of mountain stone and over its mossy eaves a clump of aged pines spread great branches—the wings of Peace. Two small-paned windows with white blinds flanked the narrow-hooded portal gained by foot-worn flags. It

had been the first pious act of Hannah Sandwith on coming to central Pennsylvania to rear this house of prayer, where she and her descendants might worship in accordance with the tenets of George Fox. It stood as the only monument to Quakerism in a region almost wholly settled by Scotch-Irish Calvinists.

The Meeting House door, with its antiquated latch, stood ajar this First Day morning as Hecla and Dave turned their steps thither. Inside was a tiny vestibule, having two swinging doors. Hecla and her brother, separating, entered opposite sides of a wooden partition dividing male from female.

Dave took a vacant seat near the entrance. Meeting had already begun and he received the reproving glances of his uncles, Pentecost and Gideon, in the gallery. His seat chanced to be next Richard Hallett, the stranger who had arrived a few weeks before at Dunkirk.

The congregation was, as a rule, small, being mostly limited to the Sandwith family, part of their kin and a few townspeople of no particular persuasion, like Doctor Proudfoot, who was wont to say he came for an hour's rest after an arduous week of country practice. Quarterly Meeting, however, added visiting Friends—evangelists on whom the Meeting depended for special dispensations of grace. This was now in session and the building was filled with worshipers. Some of these were Dunkirk folk, drawn to-day by curiosity to see Benjamin Truelove, a Quaker preacher of eloquent address and having repute as a seer—a quality now rarely attached to followers of George Fox.

Richard Hallett had heard with some interest of the Quaker seer who, notwithstanding his youth, was held

in high respect for his inspired "messages," but it was less Benjamin Truelove that brought him to Meeting this morning than his desire to see again Hecla Sandwith, the girl who had made such a decided impression on him the night of his journey to Dunkirk. Now, in the characteristic silence that had fallen on the assemblage, he curiously examined his surroundings.

There was something pleasing in the appearance of the Meeting House interior, despite the extreme plainness. Rows of unpainted deal benches, cushioned here and there on the women's side in sage-colored *moire antique*, faced a tier of seats railed off from the body of the Meeting and reserved for elders and approved ministers of the Gospel. Fastened to the railing on the men's side, near the wooden gate, was a lidded box in which the minutes of the Meeting were kept. Wood stoves, their crooked pipes passing through the ceiling, were set into alcoves in the unpapered walls of refreshing whiteness. A green carpet of unobtrusive sprig covered the floor, with a few brown sheepskin rugs added for the special comfort of aged Quakeresses. Green Venetian shades half rolled up hung on windows, the small square lights of which were opalescent with weather. Through the green slats the bright May day trembled in drops of molten gold, and moted sunbeams searching the partial gloom fell discreetly on the heads of the congregation, where plain bonnets and broad-brimmed beavers mixed with the gay headgear of the World's People.

The sliding panels of the wood partition which insured the privacy of male and female respectively during Sittings for Discipline were pushed up. Through this

the heads of worshipers on each side could be seen as in a picture-frame and also those who occupied the more elevated benches of the gallery running the room's length.

It was Hecla's first attendance at Meeting since her return from Lititz, where she had received religious instruction of the Moravian Sisters who conducted that fashionable seminary. Memories now came back to her of the long hours she had spent in the old Meeting House—the First Days and the Fourth Days, when the waiting before the Lord had only occasionally been broken by her Uncle Pentecost's sermon or her Aunt Deborah's prayer. She recalled with what impatience she had watched a certain sunbeam creep over the carpet until it reached a spot which generally marked the time when Meeting broke up. Others besides herself had as impatiently followed its slow progress, and if the moment failed of the desired result, faint coughs and mild shuffling of the feet added their hint to the solar ray.

The responsibility of terminating youthful penance was vested on account of his years in Hecla's Cousin Isaac—dearest of meek earthly souls—who sat on the elders' bench, and in all but the mildest weather wore his gray Shetland shawl. The actions of Cousin Isaac were anxiously watched at such crises. During the long periods of silence he sat with arms folded and eyes closed, apparently asleep. From time to time he would rouse himself, open his eyes, pass a hand over a long lock of silken white hair on his bald head and look meditatively at his hat, which he placed always on the seat beside him; after which he would relapse into seeming slumber. These performances, which raised false hopes

in juvenile bosoms, were at last terminated by the gentle-faced elder reaching out his hand for his beaver, placing it on his head and then saying with a benignant smile, "I think it is about the usual hour." This monitor of passing time now himself waited with folded arms for eternity in the greater Silence of the Friends' burying-ground on the top of a high hill bulwarking Dunkirk.

Hecla used to employ herself studying the familiar traits and peculiarities of her family at large as she sat through the trying hour. On the elders' bench was Gideon Sandwith, her severe-visaged bachelor uncle, who had a habit of lapping one thumb over the other on his knitted palms with machine-like regularity. Often as she watched him and his unchanging expression Hecla wondered what mysterious hard thoughts were concealed under that stony facial mask. On the tier above sat her Uncle Pentecost. He had given up law because of "conscientious scruples," and had since become an "accredited minister of the Gospel." Hecla might always know when he was going to address the Meeting by the preliminary muscular twitches of his cheeks, whose loose skin hung down in folds, giving his face the large solemn dignity of a mastiff's. On the opposite side of the partition, also on the preachers' bench, sat Pentecost's wife, Deborah, her round face having a serious calm. She dressed richly—no one was more particular than Friend Deborah about the exact shade of her plain silk gown—and wore often in summer, hidden under her immaculate Swiss kerchief, a white tea-rose. Hecla liked in her aunt this one little departure from the rigors of her faith.

Beside Hecla to-day sat Harmony, her half-sister, wearing the bonnet, with its wreath of pink rosebuds, Hecla had brought her from Philadelphia—Hecla's own selection rather than the one Harmony, with her love of quiet dress, would have made. A short distance off was her pretty young cousin, Hetty Waln, ward of Gideon Sandwith, to keep in whose good graces Hetty wore the plainest of plain Quaker costumes. Hecla could see, too, her father, and the contented set of his mouth told her that the bit of tobacco was still under his tongue. From beneath his seat came a slight snoring sound made by Spot, the coach-dog, who always managed to slip into Meeting unobserved. Whenever there was a disturbance of barking outside Spot, quietly trotting out of the door, would disperse the disturbers and, returning to his place, resume the snores Hecla's Aunt Deborah found so annoying.

Hecla's wandering thoughts, this First Day morning, were gradually brought back by the unwonted solemnity of the Meeting. The presence of Benjamin Truelove seemed to exert a peculiar influence over the gathering. The young evangelist had been given a place on the upper bench of the gallery where now sunbeams, as if by divine direction, haloed his head; the glorified uplift thus given his countenance separating him from the other visiting Friends beside him. He was of a medium height, slightly tending toward a rich fleshiness, with a serene set to his full lips, and having a clear high brow about which lustrous hair—the fine blue-black hair of the enthusiast—showed under his hat. He sat motionless, his hands folded on his knees and his eyes closed. Thus seated he seemed indeed an absorbed fig-

ure of holy sensuous young manhood. In the hypnotic quiet rose and fell the sighing of the pines outside like even sounds of sleep, and occasionally came the stamp of horses in the Meeting House shed. When a worshiper coughed or made any slight stir, it acted almost like a shock on the tense atmosphere of the room.

At last the waiting was ended by a movement on the part of the young preacher; he laid aside his beaver and rose. For a while he stood with his clear eyes fixed in front of him and one hand resting on the rail. As he so stood moisture gathered on his brow. To some the clustering drops marked his inspiration—were as the dews of Hermon. It was perhaps half a minute before he spoke, and when he did the low melodious tones seemed a continuance of the quiet into which the spirit had been dipped. It was an inebriating voice, of the most golden music. Under its exquisite cadences the congregation was soothed into a kind of happy lethargy, as though lotus food of sound were given them of the Lord. The effect of this showed in the expression of people's eyes dwelling on the preacher. Benjamin True-love's words—a mixture of scriptural and original imagery—were a rapt invocation to the Almighty in complete forgetfulness, it seemed, of his auditors:

“It is in my heart to praise Thee, O my God; let me never forget Thee, what Thou wast to me in the night, by Thy presence in the day of trial when I was beset in darkness, when I was cast out as a wandering bird, when I was assaulted with strong temptations, then Thy presence in secret did preserve me, and in a low state I felt Thee near me. When the floods sought to sweep me away, Thou didst set a compass for them how they should pass

over. When my way was through the sea and when I passed under the mountains, there wast Thou present with me. When the weight of the hills was upon me, Thou beheldst me, else had I sunk under the earth. When I was as one altogether helpless, when tribulation and anguish were upon me, day and night, and the earth without foundation; when I was on the way of wrath, and passed by the gate of hell, when all comforts stood afar off, and he that is mine enemy had domination; when I was cast into the pit, and was as one appointed to death, when I was between millstones, and as one crushed with the weight of the adversary; as a father Thou wast with me; Thou wast the rock of my presence. When the mouths of the lions roared against me and fear took hold of my soul in the pit, then I called upon Thee daily; Thou answeredst me from Thy habitation, saying, 'I will set thee above all fears, and lift up thy feet above the head of oppression.' I believed and was strengthened, and Thy word was salvation. Thou didst fight on my part when I wrestled with death, and when darkness would have shut me up, then the light shone upon me, and Thy banner was over my head. When my work was in the furnace as I passed through fire, by Thee I was not consumed, though the flames ascended above my head; else through fear I had fallen. I saw Thee, and believed, so the enemy could not prevail."

As he spoke, the preacher's body swayed slightly in sympathy with the rhythmic sentences and his face shone with almost lamplike fervor. After he sat down the wave of silence which had rolled away returned to settle on the surface of depths undisturbed. It was not until a horse whinnied loudly that his hearers breathed

easily. Some glancing around sought in the looks of others explanation of their own affected state.

Hecla had noticed that her sister Harmony was giving rapt attention to the preacher; that the color gradually faded as she listened and her lips moved from time to time as if they framed some inaudible sentence. Harmony was the youngest of Mr. Sandwith's step-children. Her pale face, in which, under a pure brow, were set earnest chestnut eyes, wore always the sweet expression of one who accepts uncomplainingly the burdens of life. Gentle girlhood saddened by some secret pain showed on the rather irregular mouth, and Harmony's smile, full of kindness, had its half-pathos. Once Hecla thought she heard her sister murmur: "Oh, if I were only good—only good like thee!"

The appealing eyes that Harmony had fixed on Benjamin Truelove's countenance as he sat on the bench above her seemed finally to have an effect upon him. On finishing his invocation to the Lord he had reseated himself and sunk into meditation. Suddenly he opened his eyes as if startled by some plea falling on his inner ear. Rising, he leaned across the rail in front of him and let his eyes deeply search the faces assembled. Then in a clear mandatory tone he uttered the brief words: "Cease desiring and be!"—with which he took once more his seat.

The abrupt command stirred the Meeting. It was as if some answer had been made to a wish or exercise of conscience in its midst. Those of Quaker persuasion anxiously searched their hearts, thinking Benjamin Truelove had addressed their state. It was on Harmony, however, that the effect of the preacher's words was most

marked. It seemed to the sensitive girl he had heard the inaudible prayer that had instinctively moved her lips. She trembled at the thought that he had not only heard, but had been incited by Heaven thus to answer her spiritual longing.

"Harmony, what is the matter—are you ill?" Hecla whispered in concern, for her stepsister's delicate hands were wrung together on her lap.

She received no answer. Harmony had not heard; and her eyes, still fixed upon the young evangelist, were full of tears.

After Meeting there was general hand-shaking and Friend greeted Friend with a "How does thee do?" outside in the yard. Human nature asserted itself after the hour of suppression and the low talk with most took an every-day tone after a few pious comments were exchanged like: "A searching discourse," "Much favored by the Spirit to-day," "The Lord has been with us," as tribute to what had just been heard. The men fell into knots to discuss the weather and the state of the crops, and careful housewives exchanged recipes.

Harmony sought to escape the notice of those standing about the Meeting House door, but her pretty cousin, Hetty Waln, dressed in the plain costume her uncle Gideon Sandwith enforced, saw her and caught hold of her sleeve.

"So thee's got on the new bonnet Hecla brought thee from Philadelphia!" she said enviously. "What a pity pink makes thee look pale!"—then noticing Harmony's serious face: "Why, what's the matter—isn't thee feeling well?"

“Weren’t you impressed with Benjamin Truelove’s sermon, Hetty?” Harmony murmured.

“Oh, I suppose so,” was the other’s reply, “but I couldn’t help worrying over the goose in the oven at home. I’m sure it’s burnt to a crisp—and six Friends to dinner!”—and she ran off gaily.

The Englishman who, though a stranger to all present, had received kindly greeting from many, was passing out of the little iron wicket of the Meeting House yard when Joshua, the iron-master, stopped him, saying cordially:

“Thee is Richard Hallett, is thee not? My nephew, Wentworth Oliver, has told me of thy wish to study our industries. He must bring thee to my house. Hecla, here is the young English stranger of whom thy cousin spoke to us.”

Hecla’s violet-gray eyes encountered Hallett’s long enough to observe the admiration written there; and she said with some embarrassment: “I believe I saw you the night of your arrival in Dunkirk. Did you not stop at one of the cottages near the Works to see a night-blooming cereus?”

“Yes,” said he, “and I shall never forget what I saw.”

Others approached to welcome Hecla home after her long absence at school and Richard Hallett, thanking the iron-master for his invitation, turned away. He had met Hecla Sandwith and the meeting, brief as it was, strengthened the charm she exercised over him. He thought her even more beautiful than when he caught his first glimpse of her on the threshold of Christy Pickle’s cottage. He admired the pure tones of her voice, and her eyes with their suggestion of melancholy seemed to him extraordinary—more interesting than those of

any young girl he knew. He resolved to ask Mr. Sandwith's nephew to take him to Burnham early in the week.

"Mr. Hallett isn't especially good-looking, is he, father?" Hecla said to her father on their way home.

"Beauty buys no beef," Mr. Sandwith dryly returned. "Thee thinks too much of appearances, daughter. Richard Hallett has what's better than beauty—an honest face. It's the man of integrity that shines brightest in the fire, as William Penn says."

Hecla smiled. She was thinking of Richard Hallett's words to her.

CHAPTER V

A STRAIN OF RARENESS

Richard Hallett's first visit upon arriving at Dunkirk had been to the offices of Wentworth Oliver, a young lawyer with whom Hallett had had some correspondence before leaving England. Wentworth was attorney for the Snow Shoe Coal Company, which had been formed several years previously with the object of developing certain mountain regions near Dunkirk. The company had invested considerable capital in a coal mine and had negotiated with the Englishman with a view of offering him the management of its affairs. Negotiations had, however, been broken off. The mine in which the promoters had such confidence suddenly pinched out. Wentworth wrote of this to Richard Hallett, telling him that the company was discouraged and its capital exhausted. Hallett had perfectly understood the situation, but having become interested in what Wentworth had written him regarding the mining and timber resources of central Pennsylvania he had made up his mind he would come out to America and look over the ground for himself. Dissatisfaction with the work he was engaged in had inspired the resolve. In a new and promising region he hoped he would find opportunities worthy his energy and talent. Wentworth had received him most

cordially and promised to put him in touch with his uncle, Joshua Sandwith, and with Mr. Trevis Markham, a countryman of Hallett's living in a rather remote part of the Alleghanies: both of them influential land-holders and men of affairs in the county.

It was also through Wentworth Oliver's suggestion that Hallett took up his abode at Mrs. Tathem's boarding-house, as preferable to the Red Lion Inn. Mrs. Tathem's was the only boarding-house in Dunkirk, for Mrs. Littlepage's, where David Sandwith had quarters, was out near the Sandwith Works. It occupied what was considered an enviable position at the corner of the main street of the town and the Diamond. If you tired of the dullness of a side street you sat on Mrs. Tathem's broad door-sill and saw all that was going and had the very latest gossip furnished you by Miss Pinkie.

In response to Richard Hallett's knock at Mrs. Tathem's an old woman appeared, her slovenly frock hitched up on one side displaying a white cotton leg to the knee. On seeing the stranger, Katey Lookup, as she was unkindly called, elevated her chin in what Richard Hallett took to be disdain. Katey was said in Dunkirk to have flowing in her veins the blood of Danish kings; but the old woman did not prize her alleged extraction and was equally indifferent to her afflicted vision, which caused her to tilt back her head so oddly. She slaved for Mrs. Tathem and had two passions: one for feeding stray cats from her mistress' larder; the other for chasing taunting little boys with her broomstick. She admitted the Englishman with a kind of grunt.

Mrs. Tathem's house seemed to Hallett to be a curiously crowded antique shop. There was abundance of

Chippendale, Wedgewood, Delft and Copeland ware about; odd old mirrors, and other heirlooms of price. These Mrs. Tathem cherished as a careful housekeeper guards what can not well be replaced by other chattels, old or new. The long heavily-carved mahogany sofa in the hall had a great gash in its haircloth upholstery. No one was able to say what had not been lost in this historic hole. It was a handsome piece of furniture, but Mrs. Tathem would gladly have disposed of it for a good modern piece. She felt the same temper toward the gilt reflectors that elongated people's looks, and she would have preferred new uneccentric mirrors in which she could see herself to advantage. The great fire-dogs and fenders on the hearth under the white wooden mantel-pieces with their crystal girandoles only reminded her of a want of whiting. She approved of her cream pitchers—silver cows with curled tails and noses that gurgled milk—since they afforded her boarders polite amusement.

Mrs. Tathem approved of well-bred spirits. Amiability had marked her for its own. Nature had also spared the good lady the trouble of having to look pleased. The fixed smile on her lips, about which little eddyings played, proclaimed her perpetual graciousness. To a constant smile she added delighted simpers and small coughs of convention. She tossed her head with mild remnants of coquetry which caused her long jet ear-rings to jingle.

Hearing that a gentleman had applied for accommodations, Mrs. Tathem hastily donned her best bugled gown, and, adding a twisted buffalo comb to two silver ones, rustled into the parlor like softly falling rain. She

assured Richard Hallett of the comforts of a home and, on terms being agreed to, accepted him at once as her guest and that night honored him by placing him at table where he might enjoy the full benefits of her friendliness.

She presided over the great copper urn at the end of the board and as she filled thin cups with thinner tea dispensed her confidences. The confidences concerned her daughter Pinkie—her charms and her numerous love affairs. Then there were trials that Mrs. Tathem whispered. The tenderloins, Mr. Hallett must, alas, know, were constantly disappearing from the beefsteaks; for Katey Lookup would feed them to favorite cats. Cats, too, accounted for the insipidity of the soup: for what had Katey Lookup done with the mutton bones? Boarders complained. Yes, she had actually lived to hear boarders complain. And the oil portrait of her father, the once influential iron-master, with his white choker and a hand thrust in his bosom, looked down on her from the dining-room wall!

Richard Hallett was informed of the distinctions that Dunkirk boasted as a county town. He must be acquainted with the important fact that Dunkirk had a spring which was a miracle to be compared with the Rock of Horeb. The spring gushed three thousand gallons a minute and had supplied the town with water in wooden pipes since the beginning of the century. Did Mr. Hallett like hard or soft water? Hard, she hoped, for otherwise he would grieve the good citizens of Dunkirk, who were sure to ask him his preference. Talleyrand, the great French statesman, had visited Dunkirk when in America and had exclaimed over the wondrous spring

in words that every Dunkirk school-boy knew by heart from laboriously tracing them in his copy-book. Dunkirk congratulated itself on the way it had secured the honor of being the county seat. To be sure, a town a mile away was the head of navigation; but the enterprising settlers of Dunkirk had loaded a flat-boat with old furniture, dragged it to the town and then posted to Lancaster, where the legislature was sitting, to announce that the first boat of the season had reached Dunkirk. What happened? Why, the legislature, thinking Dunkirk was the head of navigation, signed the charter already made out for signatures and Dunkirk won its preëminence over the rival township!

From the subject of Dunkirk Mrs. Tathem drifted on to a chronicle of her boarders. There was Mr. Blair Nandine, the Beau Brummel of rural dandyism, who wrote, in a neat hand, original poetry, which, tied with a blue ribbon, he presented to the young ladies of the town. Mr. Nandine considered himself to be the speaking image of the Bird of Avon, as Mrs. Tathem called the poet, and was always quoting him. Mr. Nandine had the idea he talked to himself and was always asking Mrs. Tathem if he did, and Mrs. Tathem was always telling him he didn't, which wasn't true, but why should Mr. Nandine worry over such a trifle? People would express their feelings to themselves, which wasn't a crime nor yet a disease.

Unkind people said Mr. Nandine had made declarations to every one and every one had said no to Mr. Nandine. She doubted such a report. Mr. Nandine had never proposed to Pinkie. But Pinkie never encouraged; people had to encourage Pinkie. There was also

Mr. Donovan, the Episcopal rector, off now on his "Lacedæmonian cry": such an agreeable young man he was, and so eloquent in the pulpit! Mr. Hallett must go to the Little Church on the Hill and hear him! People were that affected by his sermons: he had once described a thunderstorm with such effect an old lady had excitedly raised her umbrella. These were her favorite young men and she tried to be a mother to them. Of course she didn't mean—Mr. Hallett mustn't think she meant—she hoped Pinkie wouldn't—at least she hoped she wouldn't quite yet. Pinkie was *so* young!

Mrs. Tathem's monologues—they were mostly monologues—did not interest Richard Hallett, who cared nothing for gossip. But Mrs. Tathem did not notice his inattention, as her hands—on one was a large mourning-ring in memory of the late Mr. Tathem—fluttered among the tea things. She was glad of a new ear into which to pour her old fluencies as she poured her tepid brew into her boarders' cups.

One evening after tea, the week following Richard Hallett's meeting with Mr. Sandwith and his daughter Hecla, Wentworth Oliver called, as had been agreed, to take him to Burnham. They reached the house after a quarter of an hour's walk in the falling twilight, which still gave a hint of the stately grounds surrounding the gray old mansion.

The door was opened by Mr. Sandwith himself and they were ushered into a long double parlor divided by leaf doors of mahogany with cut-glass handles. The furniture of the room was of substantial old-time make, but there was an air of simplicity. The walls were bare

of pictures except over the high wooden mantel-piece, where hung a steel engraving representing Elizabeth Fry reading the Bible to the prisoners at Newgate. In the rear of the parlors, however, might have been seen one object out of accord with this comfortable Quaker plainness—the little rosewood spinet which had caused the quarrel between the iron-master and his brother Pentecost.

Their host gave Hallett the impression of a man of marked individuality. He had a quick, nervous manner, and the Englishman thought he had seldom met any one who put so many keen questions to him in so short a time. Mr. Sandwith asked about his experiences as overseer of coal mines in England and Wales, and his guest's straightforward, clear answers made an excellent impression on him. Fastened in this conversational vise Hallett could only observe from a distance Hecla Sandwith, with whom Wentworth Oliver was talking.

Richard Hallett's attention was continually straying to the pair. The girl's voice, of an exquisite quality and modulation, affected him as no voice had done before. It became more difficult for him to give his attention to Mr. Sandwith and geology. Once he surprised Hecla's glance fixed upon him with interest. The eyes added to the spell she exercised over him. They were unusually dark-pupiled, tragic, full of intelligence. The clear brow from which the red-brown hair was drawn back seemed to him to have an ideal purity, like the features, delicate and finely modeled. Richard Hallett considered her the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

He had known few women and none intimately. The hardships of his youth, the labors of early manhood, had

secluded him from the world and thus limited his experience. He recognized a capacity for love, but love he had so far put resolutely aside as interfering with his ambitions. But he was ripe for marriage now. Was he not starting out in a new sphere of life wherein he confidently hoped to make his fortune? The idea of a wife had vaguely come to him the night he had caught his first glimpse of Hecla at Christy Pickle's cottage; it had entered into his dreams; was growing in him as a supreme necessity.

"Miss Sandwith has, I presume, many admirers," he said to his companion on their way back to Dunkirk.

"Yes," Oliver returned with reserve in his voice, "my cousin is a popular girl. You were attracted by her?"

"She seems to me a very interesting as well as beautiful young woman," Richard Hallett said fervently. "I should like to know her well."

Wentworth Oliver looked at him quickly as he replied:

"She is not easy to know—to understand, I mean."

Nothing more was said, and in a few moments they parted at Mrs. Tathem's door.

That night brought passionate dreams of Hecla Sandwith to the young Englishman—dreams that made him, when he woke in the morning, feel a strange sense of nearness to the woman with whom he had barely exchanged a word.

He woke early refreshed by sound sleep. A sponge bath in the ice-cold water of the famous spring which wooden pipes carried to all parts of the town set body and spirits in a glow. He threw up the window of his bedroom and drew in deep draughts of the pure mountain air. A view of the town lay before him. Beyond the

jumble of dew-wet roofs rose the round pine-fringed summits of the neighboring foot-hills fleeced now with mist exhaled from hidden streams. The red morning light, striking through the maples on the court-house green, brought out their vivid spring tint. Jays sang in the branches outside his window. The hilly little town of Dunkirk wore a bright and homely air of invitation; and Richard Hallett felt the manhood in him meet it joyously. He was twenty-eight years of age, energetic and self-confident. Life had had its difficulties and hardships, but he had perfect health, the endurance of a vigorous frame; these supported him in his ambitions. Positiveness was one of his well-developed traits, and, as he stood there by the window, filling his lungs with the tingling air, he said to himself that Hecla Sandwith was the woman he wanted for a wife and that he would win her.

CHAPTER VI

MATTER FOR A MAY MORNING

Hetty Waln, a plump pretty figure in Quaker dress, was on her way to Burnham to see her cousin, Hecla Sandwith. The road to the iron-master's country home was dusty. Hetty with one hand fastidiously bundled up her skirts and with the other held a handkerchief above her eyes in lieu of a parasol.

Behind her lay the town of Dunkirk, where Hetty lived with her uncle, Gideon Sandwith. Gideon Sandwith was her guardian and had reared his ward in strict conformity with Quakerism—at least in all matters pertaining to outward form. She was compelled to use the plain language and, what was a greater trial, to wear unworldly costume. Hetty had a passion for what Friend Hannah Fisher, one of the Quarterly Meeting visitors, had been moved by the Spirit to call “gay and ungodly adornment” only a few days before. Hetty had listened to the sermon with a demure expression, but envy had burned her heart as she looked at Hecla wearing her new fine Leghorn hat with its long white plume.

The blood of spring thrilled and quickened, mantling the May day with nameless greens and reds of unfolding leaf. A mist brooded in the air, giving the country landscape the soft purple bloom of a plum. The way-

side sod along which Hetty delicately picked her path was dotted with dandelions—guilders newly coined; and in damp places of the road butterflies fluttered like scraps of white paper. On clumps of hawthorn still lay the floral snowfall of the year that had once silvered all the orchard distances. The prime of cherry and pear was past—their petals lay in white rings around their roots like fallen girdles; but in corners of stone fences, over which the passion-flower trailed, the wild crab gladdened the day with pink.

The pastoral of May was lost on the little Quakeress: she considered nature with a mind matter-of-fact as the multiplication table. Glancing at the cloudless sky overhead she wondered if there were going to be a drought. Drought meant damage to crops and damage to crops meant damage to Hetty. Her knowledge of plowing and planting was almost as accurate and full as a farmer's almanac. She had fertile acres of her own to which she devoted anxious thought, visiting them as often as her housekeeping duties allowed. Hetty was not yet of age, but her farmers had a wholesome dread of her and her shrill silver treble.

The road which Hetty was climbing ran through her Uncle Joshua's land. On one side, stretching from fence to hilltop, ebbed and flowed the thin green waters of the wheat as if mildly moon-drawn; and she noted with envy how the ripples whitened higher than her own wheat blades. Her vexation at this turned to exultation as she journeyed on. In the next field her uncle's farmer was plowing. She paused a moment to watch. Across the slope a figure moved, tinged a common tone of terracotta from the dust that smoked behind. Sunlight

glistened on the sweating flanks of two white-faced horses, as the moist pink earth rolled like billows from the shining plowshare. Along a lessening sage-colored strip—last year's matted clover—two children in blue sunbonnets ran in advance of the horses chased by a barking sheep-dog. Now the farmer passed under the shadow of a great mountain pine that, solitary, spread broad benignant palms, blessing the fruitfulness of earth. Hungry crows filled the air with their coarse cries. Hetty smiled. She had finished her corn-planting, and her uncle was only plowing!

Where she now stood a path led from the highway to the home of Joshua Sandwith. Hetty could see, across a broad meadow, the stone mansion through trunks of a stately black walnut grove. The meadow was ribboned by a stream that in front of the house looped around a turban-shaped isle with rustic arbor and weeping willow tree. The green meadow grass was clouded with sheep at-graze, and Hetty, as she passed along, clapped her hands to see the black-stockinged lambs scud after their frightened dams—a sudden breaking of fleeces like the clearing of the heavens by a March gale. Her step on the foot-bridge sent green-headed frogs splashing into a brook choked with water-cress. Near the house she stopped to hammer mischievously on the trunk of a gnarled dogwood, summoning a pair of aged flying squirrels, who blinked at their disturber through the white star-blossoms of an upper bough.

Reaching the house she opened the front door without knocking and entered a cool white-pillared hall ornamented with antlers, settee and Dutch clock. Noah, the coachman, was on his knees waxing the floor, and half-

way up the narrow staircase with its white pilasters and mahogany rail, a huge gray rabbit squatted, cleaning its ears with awkward paws. This knowing old gourmand was a privileged pet of the iron-master, who had taught it the trick of "throwing the poker" and other accomplishments in which both took pride. Learning from Noah that her cousin was in the kitchen, Hetty turned thither, coaxing the rabbit to follow her. A jar stood on the dining-room table, and, as she passed, Hetty curiously lifted the lid; at the half-open kitchen door she paused to eavesdrop, with the only reward of hearing Harmony's mild voice ask for the caraway seeds.

The kitchen was a large brick-paved room. From the smoke-stained rafters dropped festoons of dried apples and onions cunningly plaited; and on each side of the huge fireplace paper bags hung marked "Thyme," "Summer Savory" and "Sweet Marjoram." The tall wooden mantel-piece shone with brass candlesticks and the lead-colored dresser opposite, with well-rubbed pewter ware. Through an open door could be glimpsed a flagged space sheltered by a grape-vine, with rows of white-washed beehives and round plastered brick oven like a huge mushroom. Before this Aunt Milcah or "Milky" Lawson, the negro cook, knelt, raking out wood-ashes preparatory to bread-baking. The dough in wicker baskets lined with cabbage leaves stood on a wooden shovel ready to be thrust into the heat.

"What's thee doing, Hecla? Thee can't cook," Hetty said scornfully as she entered the kitchen.

Hecla stood by the fire, guarding a copper kettle on a crane, a bottle in one hand, a large silver spoon in the other. She had a fresh morning look in her green-and-

white check gingham, her ruffled jaconet apron and wide linen collar caught with a gold-mounted true-love knot of her mother's hair. Her own tresses drawn down over her ear-tips were held by a silver comb. Turned-back sleeves showed her shapely blue-veined arms.

Hetty and the rabbit were both sniffing with satisfied noses.

"Don't talk, please: I am making mint-drops and I have to count as soon as the sugar boils."

"How many does thee count?"

"Hush, Hetty, please."

Hecla poured spearmint into the spoon with great exactness and stirred it into the kettle, her lips moving. Instantly a smarting cloud of fragrance enveloped her, rolling up to the rafters.

"How does thee make thy mint-drops?" Hetty demanded, as Hecla poured the liquid into a willow-ware platter.

"It's a school secret, Hetty. The Sisters make us promise not to tell it."

"One can't bother to keep all one's promises."

"I keep mine."

"Thee pretends to be so superior," her cousin retorted at Hecla's rather complacent tone. Prying up a mint-drop she tasted it judiciously. "Thee's like thy mint-drops and they're no better than common ones."

She threw aside her bonnet and seated herself near the kitchen table where Harmony was beating batter in a bowl, a cook-book before her open at a page marked "Jumbles."

"Well, I nearly melted coming out," the Quakeress commented, fanning herself with her handkerchief,

"and burned my face in the bargain; and all for want of a sinful sunshade. Well, walking's good to reduce your weight, that's one consolation. Does thee think,"—anxiously—"I've grown thinner, Hecla?"

"No, I can't say I do, Hetty."

Hetty bit her lip and said quickly: "I met thy father on his way to town. How badly he looks! I suppose he's worried over giving up business. Uncle Gideon thinks Dave will ruin the Works. He says there is no sense in his new scheme of making coal by chemistry."

"Uncle Gideon need not distress himself, Hetty, since father is satisfied with David," was the reply. "I should hardly consider Uncle Gideon a judge of chemical coal."

"Oh, maybe not. Uncle Gideon is too fond of money to risk it in patents and new notions like thy father. David may be all thee thinks him but no one manages thy affairs like thyself. I manage my farms and I intend to manage my fortune—when I get it from Uncle Gideon—no matter whether I marry or not."

"And you'll manage your husband, too, Hetty."

"He certainly shan't manage me," she affirmed. "I've been managed enough by Uncle Gideon." She helped herself to another mint-drop. "I wonder thee hasn't been to town, Hecla, after a week at home."

"How could I go?" replied Hecla. "You know we have had company."

"Well, Quarterly Meeting's over at last, thank goodness! I nearly wore myself out cooking. Friends are so fond of the creature comforts. Has thee heard any news? Benjamin Truelove has been creating a sensation, stopping people and telling them he has a 'message' for them. And, of course, everybody's discussing

Richard Hallett. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he turned out an adventurer."

"Well, I assure you that's not the impression Mr. Hallett makes on father and myself, Hetty."

"Oh, so he's been out to see thee, has he? I suppose thee is preparing to make thyself agreeable."

"You say such foolish things, Hetty! Whenever did I wish attention?"

"Thee's indifferent to admirers, no doubt. *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him?* Why is thee always trying to take me in? It's like thy airs about thy mint-drops and keeping thy word. Set thy cap for him if thee pleases. Thee won't make *me* jealous for one."

"I confess I find Mr. Hallett's conversation very entertaining. It is a relief, certainly, after Dunkirk small-talk."

"I suppose you mean he talks about Europe. Well, he's not the only person who can do that! There's Blair Nandine, just home from his trip abroad. I'd rather hear what he has to say. He knows how to describe the Paris fashions. Did thy father tell thee about the souvenir he brought him—the pocket comb? As if anybody could help knowing thy father wears a wig! How many has he, anyway, Hecla? People are always asking me. Blair said he bought the comb especially for dear Mr. Sandwith, and Uncle Joshua lifted off his wig and answered, 'Thee lies, friend Nandine.' Thy father has such a way of offending people."

"Father hates people who tell falsehoods, Hetty," Hecla replied.

"Well, if thee's like thy father thee ought to hate the

poem Blair Nandine wrote thee—though, after all, it only called thee ‘passing’ fair.”

“‘Passing’ fair is Shakespeare for ‘surpassing.’ Really you ought to read more and improve your mind!”

“I read *Godey’s Lady’s Book*—that’s enough literature for me. And if ‘passing’ means ‘surpassing,’ then it surpasses the truth about thee.”

Here Molly Tucker made a waddling entrance into the kitchen. The old family seamstress suffered from an interference of the feet that was constantly causing her to fall down stairs. She nursed a grievance against Hecla and it was in a complaining nasal tone that she said: “Heckly, your Aunt Seaborn’s in the parlor, haven’ a spell. If you hadn’t went an’ took the keys away from me I could ha’ give her some wine out a the chimney closet.”

Hecla hastily left the kitchen, and Hetty now gave her attention to Harmony, who had quietly continued her labors without taking part in the conversation. Hetty, restless little busybody that she was, her eyes lit with red sparkles like a squirrel’s, nibbled her nails a moment in thought.

“Is it thy cake or thy conscience that makes thee so wrapped up in thyself?” she asked. “Thee hasn’t said a word.”

“You know you have been doing a good deal of talking yourself.”

Harmony spoke softly as one might hush usual tones in sick-room ministrations. In quality the voice was like a vesper chime after the sharp tinkle of a tea-bell.

“I suppose one of thy headaches is coming on, thee looks so pale. It’s odd the way thee gets headaches when

there's going to be company. Some people would say thee encouraged them so thee might stay in thy room and let Hecla do the entertaining."

"Hecla is more accomplished than I am and she is fond of company."

"Thee would be too, if thee didn't brood so," Hetty said authoritatively. "I advise thee to stop drinking coffee; it's bad for the nerves and causes melancholy." Hetty was fond of recommending abstinence from the things in which she most loved to indulge. "But what's one to do? Doctor Proudfoot says our limestone spring gives goitres." Hetty's hand went to her throat. "Sometimes I feel positively certain I am getting a goitre and ought to wear amber beads. But Uncle Gideon would object—to a string of pills." Hetty had a long list of ailments and nothing interested her more than new remedies. Heroic ones particularly appealed to her—when others tried them.

"Harmony," she continued, half-closing her eyes, "I think I know what's the matter with thee. Thee believes it religion, but I say it's thy hair. Heavy hair draws the life out of one. Thee ought to cut thine off and wear a little lawn cap, like Aunt Deborah, instead of taking thy father's doses. Aunt Deborah says Uncle Joshua lacks proper respect for accredited ministers of healing. I'm sure I'd never trust him after he nearly poisoned you all, mistaking poke-root for burdock. People talk so, Harmony, when one always looks sober and sad. For instance, what does thee think Pinkie Tathem says? That thee's in love with the Episcopal rector and that he's a great flirt and doesn't intend to marry. I told her how absurd it was to talk about thee and Mr. Dono-

van, with Uncle Joshua so opposed to 'hireling preachers.' Thee's such a sweet, good girl, Harmony, thee'd never do anything thy father wouldn't like, would thee?"

The toleration of Hetty's tongue was family resignation to incorrigible habit. Ordinarily Hetty's arrows fell harmless, blunt from too frequent usage. But Harmony's sensitive spirit was pierced by this last barb. She turned her deep chestnut eyes on Hetty in meek wonder at her indelicacy. Hetty only smothered a yawn. Hetty always yawned when she was most awake.

"That is not kind of you, Hetty."

"Why, Harmony, I didn't say thee was in love. I merely repeated what Pinkie Tathem told me. People are so disagreeable and gossipy. What is the use of being a near relative if one can't repeat what one hears?"

CHAPTER VII

A WOMAN OF SORROWFUL SPIRIT

Hecla found Mrs. Seaborn Oliver in tears. Her aunt was a large tragic presence of inelegant mold, dressed in perverse disregard of taste. To Mrs. Oliver, decking out the body was hanging garlands around the golden calf. She cherished bonnets falling to decay and pointed with pride to the antiquity of the slate-colored alpaca she usually wore. Her near-sighted eyes gave her the expression of one anxiously searching for some minute object, such as a moth in the air or a pin on the carpet. Her overblown cheeks emphasized the smallness of a mouth that took the pout of a child. When she was excited the blood rose into her face at unexpected and unbecoming places. In spite of aggressive utterances on the subject of female vanity and her contempt for costume, Mrs. Seaborn Oliver had one care in regard to her appearance. Nature had given her an inordinately long neck, and this she made shift to conceal with a scarf of black Spanish lace. The scarf and her brooch—the miniature of the captain of *London Hope*, the vessel on which she was born—were Mrs. Oliver's sole effects of finery.

Hecla gave her aunt a dutiful kiss, sitting down beside her on the sofa.

"Don't, Hecla," Mrs. Oliver sobbed in her melodramatic bass voice, "sit there on that chair where I can see you."

"Molly told me you felt a little faint; shall I get you some wine?"

Mrs. Oliver's frayed mitts waved aside the attention as though it were a buzzing insect. "No, Hecla, no. You seem to forget I never use fermented liquors. People persist so in mistaking grief for bodily complaint. I felt, it is true, a strange sensation after my walk here in the warmth, but I am overcome thinking of my poor dead sister. Hecla, were it not for the duty I owe your mother's children I should never enter this house. The way your father wounds my sacred feelings, insults my religion—"

"Father does not mean to wound you, aunt; you know it's just his way." And Hecla offered her aunt her handkerchief to stanch her tears.

"No, no," Mrs. Oliver lamented, more hysterical at her niece's sympathy, "no, let them roll. You know I always let my tears have their way." Pride in the activity of her tear-ducts was one of Mrs. Oliver's peculiarities. Life was to her a sort of *sal ammoniac* that she seldom inhaled without bringing moisture to her eyes. Nature had presented her with a tear-bottle for a heart and she had removed the stopper.

Hecla, watching her aunt's tears have their way, thought of the trial the lachrymose lady had been to her relatives and friends. She was her mother's only sister and had never forgiven her her enforced defection from Calvinism. To Mrs. Oliver religion was a cave in which to sit moodily and enjoy the dampness and lack of sun-

shine. Before the birth of little Jervis she had gloomily entertained Mrs. Sandwith by reading Jonathan Edwards' works. During her son Wentworth's absence at the law-school Mrs. Oliver made her home at Burnham, and sharp had been the thorn of her presence there. There were the accidents at table caused by her near-sightedness: the long unpleasant fingers dipping in the butter, which she mistook for cheese; the disputes between the iron-master and herself over infant baptism and effectual calling; and the conflicts on Sabbath keeping—Mrs. Oliver insisting there should be no cooking on "the Lord's Day." Finally, angered at Mr. Sandwith's charge that the Puritans had hanged the Quakers, she had departed with the remark that she was sorry such practices no longer obtained.

Mrs. Oliver now loosened her scarf: breathing-space was needed for the drama of these rare visits to Burnham. The tears suddenly ceased their flow. She sat up more stiffly.

"Ah, I have my troubles," she said, enunciating with tragical distinctness, "that no one understands but my son, Wentworth. There is little sympathy in the world. I do not know what I should do were I not such a brave cheerful woman. Hecla, I have come to see you, since you neglect your duty to your aunt."

"We have had Quarterly Meeting visitors, aunt; and this morning I was engaged in the kitchen."

"Yes, company to tea this evening, Wentworth informs me. You do not invite his mother; but one had best not expect consideration nowadays."

"You always refuse invitations, aunt."

"That is no reason you should not invite me. I sup-

pose I am not lively enough to suit people. The world does not understand sadness."

"Then do come this evening," Hecla said. "It is a very quiet supper for Friend Benjamin Truelove. It may cheer you."

"I do not need to be cheered," her aunt replied in offended tones. "I am content to live my retired life and leave others to amuse themselves. A calm, peaceful home is all I ask of the Lord."

After a pause Mrs. Oliver rather condescendingly complimented Hecla on her improved appearance. Her defective vision discounted the comment, but Hecla thanked her. Dave had been fond as a boy of playing tricks on his aunt, who maintained she saw perfectly. Once he had placed a tray ornamented with roses against the wall declaring it was Hecla's portrait. Mrs. Oliver had said the portrait flattered her. Mrs. Oliver next plied her niece with questions concerning her visit to Philadelphia, whither Hecla had gone after leaving boarding-school. The questions had to do for the most part with the marriages of female friends in that city and the number of their offspring. When the number was large her aunt nodded a commendatory chin, saying: "Well, I'm glad she is doing so well." Having exhausted this topic, she continued:

"I suppose you have seen your sister Lucia? Lucia was such a wilful girl to marry against the wishes of her family. I feel she must constantly be prayed for."

"Lucia is perfectly happy, aunt; why do you speak so of her?"

Mrs. Oliver's face took on a grim expression. "No children after two years! Think of it, Hecla!"

"And you call her unhappy because of that?" Hecla's voice had dignity as she asked the question. It was seldom that on this subject she freed her feelings, warped as they were by the tragedy of her mother's death.

Mrs. Oliver's hands expressed her horror as the heresy assailed her.

"Hecla, you're a wicked girl, to talk so! That comes of your father's giving you a heathen name and your mother's not bringing you up a Presbyterian, as she would have done, poor thing, had her conscience not been crushed. Now, it is not worth while getting offended with your aunt, as if I, of all people, own sister to the dear departed one, had not the right—the *right*—to express my sentiments." The mention of Mrs. Sandwith caused Aunt Seaborn new access of emotion.

Hecla patiently fixed her eyes on the florid-faced captain, who had saved her aunt from shipwreck. After some moist moments, Mrs. Oliver murmured brokenly: "Well, niece, I pray daily you may get a husband."

"I don't expect to marry, so you needn't pray for me."

"Not marry, Hecla! you talk as if you were not a Christian. Not marry! Why you are a pretty enough girl to some people. Perhaps that young Englishman, Richard Hallett, will ask you to marry him. I hear he calls at Burnham. Don't fear you have to be a spinster."

"No, I don't think that," Hecla laughed.

"Yes, I pray for you as I pray for Wentworth," her aunt went on, "although I know the angels have my boy in their keeping." Mrs. Oliver was one of the Presbyterians who considered her election sure and was persuaded Providence had herself and son under a protection such as was vouchsafed to few. "It is not neces-

sary for me to have Wentworth on my mind. Wentworth is so devoted to his mother. 'My son,' I often say to him; 'what are you going to do to-night? Do not come home early to sit with lonely old me. Forget how miserable I am and have a pleasant evening with your friends.' But Wentworth prefers the society of his mother to that of any one. Ah, Hecla, how beautiful it is when such complete sympathy exists between parent and child! Wentworth has not been very well of late, I grieve to say. I hear him pacing his room at night. Hecla,"—in a solemn whisper,—“if there were not such complete frankness existing between us I should think Wentworth was in love.”

Hecla was perceptibly moved at this announcement, but quickly mastering her emotion she said mechanically, “Do you think so, aunt?”

“Yes, and it's time he were. Wentworth must marry,” she reiterated piously. “I do not wish his affection for his mother to stand in the way of his happiness. I have been thinking Rhoda Markham would make him a suitable wife, the Markhams being of excellent English blood and comfortably off, too. You and she were school-mates, Hecla. Would you say she is worthy of my son?”

“Why, yes,” Hecla answered slowly; “Rhoda is a lovely girl.”

She paused. It surprised her to find how affected she was over this suggestion of her aunt's. She and her cousin Wentworth had been intimate since their earliest youth and they had regularly exchanged letters during Hecla's absence at boarding-school. Dunkirk gossips, knowing of this devotion, had sometimes asked how Joshua Sandwith, with his Quaker ideas, would

like his daughter's marrying her first cousin. Since her return to Burnham Hecla had seen nothing of Wentworth. He had called upon her but once—the night he had brought Richard Hallett to the house. Hecla felt hurt at this neglect. It was difficult for her to believe that her cousin no longer cared for her, and her aunt's suggestion that he might be in love seemed a plausible explanation for his inattentions.

"Yes, aunt," she said more readily, "she is a lovely girl; I am very fond of Rhoda. But you know she's an Episcopalian."

Hecla was aware her aunt regarded Episcopalians with bitter antipathy. Some indiscreet person had once invited Mrs. Oliver to hear the eloquence of Mr. Donovan, the new rector of that struggling congregation at Dunkirk, and her aunt, indulging in a rare ironic humor, answered: "I have scruples against going to places of amusement on the Lord's Day." But Mrs. Oliver met Hecla's objection blandly: "Oh, Rhoda Markham would make her religion suit if *my* son married her."

"Wentworth has not been very cousinly since I came home, Aunt Seaborn," Hecla said as her visitor arose. "He's been to the house only once, and I do think he might have come to tea to-night when he was asked."

"How exacting you are, niece!" the reply was. "Wentworth is a lawyer and his profession naturally absorbs his time."

"It must, indeed," Hecla answered with some spirit, "since it keeps him from showing others ordinary politeness."

She saw her aunt go majestically off. Mrs. Oliver trod the earth as though she were pressing underfoot

weeds of wickedness. Little Pitcher sat in the orchard listening while his tutor Karl read Jane Taylor's *Original Poem for Infant Minds*. In passing, Aunt Seaborn let one hand fall on the curly head as she murmured dolorously: "Little bundle of sin!"

Hecla, still thinking of Wentworth and his bedroom paces, picked some flowers in the garden before re-entering the house.

Hetty was in the hall tying her bonnet strings. "I suppose," she said, "thy aunt went off very sorrowful, like the rich man in the Bible. Dear me!" glancing at the clock, "how late it is! Uncle Gideon 'll be home from the ore-banks." She passed out on to the porch where Hecla the next minute heard her call:

"Come quick, thy brother's trying to ride Pedigree up the steps. He'll break his neck and serve him right." Hecla hurried to the door. Dave had succeeded in urging his chestnut mare up a flight of stone steps leading to the house. Having tied his steed he caught hold of Hetty and kissed her in spite of furious resistance. "Kisses fairly make my flesh creep," she cried, rubbing her lips with her handkerchief. "I can't abide thy ways, David Sandwith!"

"I love to kiss you, Hetty," he laughed, "you hate it so." And he went off humming the words, "Blithe roams the Indian maid, the fair Alpharetta."

"Listen to him!" Hetty exclaimed. "Hecla, thee ought to lecture thy brother on his manners. The girls complain he puts his arm around them when he takes them out riding. He's far too free. I told him what I thought and he said he had a bear's instinct and loved not wisely but too well, as some English poet put it. I

suppose his vulgarity comes of associating with common girls like Clover Littlepage."

"Hetty, you know my brother *couldn't* be anything but a gentleman."

"Oh, no doubt," was the sarcastic reply. "Thy whole family's perfect. Well, good-by. I'll be out this evening by early candle-light."

CHAPTER VIII

A VISION OF JUDGMENT

The supper-party for which Hetty Waln found Hecla and Harmony making preparations in the kitchen at Burnham was a farewell hospitality to Benjamin Truelove, the young Quaker seer, who, now Quarterly Meeting sessions were over, was about to leave Dunkirk, where he was the guest of Pentecost and Deborah Sandwith. The iron-master was fond of gathering young men about his board and would have preferred having Friend Truelove to supper without asking any of his own Sandwith kin, but Hecla overcame his fretful objections and prevailed upon him to let her invite both Joshua's brothers and her Aunt Deborah. True, the invitation to Pentecost Sandwith was a mere formality, for since the quarrel over the spinet in the parlors at Burnham, Pentecost had kept his vow of not crossing his brother's threshold. Deborah, his wife, however, still frequented the house. She approved of Pentecost's stand in the matter of the spinet, but she believed that in going to Burnham she fulfilled a pious duty she owed her brother-in-law's motherless children.

It was Deborah Sandwith who arrived before the other guests of the evening. While up stairs arranging her cap she said to Harmony: "I wish, dear child, to

“speak to thee privately. Suppose thee takes me into thy bedchamber for a moment.”

Harmony silently led her into her little bedroom, which, like Pilgrim’s Chamber of Peace, faced the east. It was furnished plainly, with none of the pretty touches common to a young girl’s room. It was seldom anybody entered it save Harmony herself, for her love of privacy was understood and respected by the household. Having shut the door, Deborah Sandwith, a calm matronly figure in her rich mouse-colored gown, turned to her niece with benignant earnestness in her round lineless face:

“Benjamin Truelove confided to me a letter that is in reply to one slipped into his hand at Meeting last Second Day by some one—a young girl, he surmises—who had a concern on her mind about her state. It was the writer’s wish that she might be prayed for. The letter was unsigned, and dear Benjamin desired me to seek out the author and give her his answer.”

She paused. Harmony showed signs of agitation. The elder woman went on:

“I thought at first that Hetty must have written the letter. Hetty, the dear child, seems so full of Christian longings when she opens her mind to me, I have been in daily hope of her receiving a deeper draught of the Spirit. But Hetty tells me she did not write it. Then it came to me that thee, Harmony, might have been moved through Benjamin’s influence to see the merits and necessities of a Redeemer. I have often prayed thee might be guided aright in heavenly paths. Thy adopted father is somewhat indifferent,”—her tone altered a little as it did always in speaking of Mr. Sandwith—“and I know thy mother’s persuasion naturally inclines thee to

find truth in teachings other than those of our Society. Nevertheless, I have had fond hopes of thee, my dear Harmony. Thy stepsister, Hecla, has disappointed me by her love of the World. I fear her thoughts are little set on things above. It would greatly rejoice me to have thee, like Hetty, a Friend by inward and outward profession. I perceive that my judgment has not been amiss and that thee has penned the letter." She gave Harmony's cheek a slight caress. "May thee be led by Benjamin's answer to give thyself indeed to the Lord."

Deborah Sandwith proceeded to search for the letter—a matter of some inconvenience, as she had placed it in a black silk bag tied round her waist under her gown and serving for pocket. She was surprised, despite her words, at this act of Harmony's, for, though a girl who shunned amusements and had serious tastes, Harmony had always been reticent on the subject of her religious feelings. Friend Deborah, with other members of the Sandwith family, had attributed the girl's quiet ways to delicate health. She was not, like Hetty, a birth-right member of the Meeting, was not even a Sandwith by blood, and that was enough to discredit in Deborah Sandwith's mind the likelihood of Harmony—sprung from pure Calvinistic stock—ever becoming one of themselves in Spirit.

Harmony, having taken the letter, turned to the window, where she slipped it with nervous fingers into her bosom. Deborah Sandwith waited, thinking she would have something to say to her. But Harmony was silent, her eyes absently fixed on the distant roofs of Dunkirk rising through masses of trees. Below the window lay an apple orchard, on the gnarled and mossy branches of

which lingered still some of their time-touched bloom. The late afternoon sun trailed long red fingers through the grass. Tree-trunks glowed like burnished copper. The wistful peace of a perfect May twilight was slowly sinking on the earth. Stirring zephyrs wafted into the chamber the perfume of lilac and locust bloom.

"There is dear Benjamin now coming through the orchard," the Quakeress said gently at Harmony's side. "Is thee going to speak to him to-night or would thee like me to do so? Thee knows he leaves us on the morrow."

"No, no, I beg thee not to mention that I wrote the letter. I do not wish him to know."

Deborah Sandwith's face denoted mild disapproval of the girl's protesting tone. The pink bonnet Harmony had worn to First Day Meeting rose before her eyes. After all, she was not wholly without her sister's taste for vain dress, and the letter may have been but a passing impulse born of the evangelist's eloquent addresses. So the Quakeress answered:

"Well, perhaps it is best so—if thee is not yet quite clear in thy mind."

Benjamin Truelove slowly approached the house. The snowing petals fell from the groined orchard boughs flecking his fine upright shoulders. He held his beaver in his hand and his face was lifted with a rapt expression to the tree-tops, whence came the chirp of nesting birds. As he drew near the two heard his voice, in the cadences that charmed listeners at Meeting, recite the passage from Solomon's Song: *"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come."*

"Dear Benjamin!" Deborah Sandwith murmured. "He has certainly the joy and spiritual blessing of the Lord. Come, Harmony, let us go down and meet thy father's guest."

On descending to the parlors they found assembled there Joshua Sandwith, Hecla and the Englishman, Richard Hallett. On seeing the last, Deborah, drawing Hecla aside, asked in a whisper how it happened that the stranger was one of the evening's guests. She had heard of the young man and his visits to Burnham and had regarded it as an act of imprudence on the iron-master's part to open his house and introduce his daughter to one whose antecedents and "convictions" were so little known to him. To invite him to-night seemed to her a real impropriety. A moment later Benjamin Truelove made his appearance at an open French window looking out on the orchard. He still held his beaver in his hand and there lingered on his lips the smile with which he had greeted the singing of the birds. For a moment he stood regarding those in the parlors, with a radiant face, as he said in his clear silver tones: "Peace be to this house!" then he advanced and clasped his host's hands. Joshua drew Hallett forward, saying: "This, Friend Truelove, is Richard Hallett, a young Englishman I wish thee to know. I met him in town and persuaded him to join us at supper." Gideon Sandwith, his niece, Hetty Waln, and other guests now arriving, the iron-master led the way into the dining-room.

The supper was a bountiful one. Aunt Milky Lawson, the negro cook, whose temper was not of the best, having relieved herself during the afternoon by fighting Noah Jackson with flat-irons, had exerted herself in the

preparation of the dishes. It was Dunkirk etiquette to praise the food and in due season the negress, jealously posted at the pantry door, had her ears gratified by compliments paid the fried chicken, the acorn-flavored ham, the pot cheese and the rolls. Hamp, the white-aproned dining-room boy, was kept busy supplying the guests with hot waffles, while Noah waved over their heads a peacock fly-brush to keep off candle-moths.

The dining-room was furnished in the plainly-carved mahogany that best suited the iron-master's taste; the linen was of fine Irish weave, and the table got its light from wax tapers in silver candle-sticks. Hecla sat at one end of the board taking charge of the copper coffee-urn—a gift from two of Mr. Sandwith's grateful protégés—on which was inscribed in large script "The Orphans' Friend." By Hecla's side was Doctor Proudfoot, his cheeks the color of the madeira he was fond of sipping in the sanded parlor of the Red Lion Inn.

"The man that marries you, Hecla, will get an excellent wife," he said with old time gallantry, as he stirred his coffee, into which Hecla had not forgotten to drop five lumps of sugar.

"There is no jewel like sincerity, Doctor Proudfoot," she smiled back; "that's one of my father's maxims. You know Aunt Milky must have the credit for the supper."

The old physician looked his admiration. "Well, you should, at least, have the credit of presiding over it gracefully. You have been seeing a good deal of Mr. Hallett, have you not?" he slyly added.

"Yes, Mr. Hallett has come out quite frequently to see father."

“It is wonderful, isn’t it, how devoted young men sometimes are to fathers?”

Hecla, as she mentioned her father, glanced a little anxiously down the table, with its cut crystal and Nan-kin china, to where Mr. Sandwith, wearing a new wig of a new hue, was talking to the young man referred to. The iron-master had several favorite table topics, not all of them calculated to please certain of his guests. If he discoursed on Presbyterianism, there were Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter Jane, distant cousins of the family, who might chance to be wounded; and there was the subject of the galvanic battery, which received smiling tolerance from Doctor Proudfoot, but was a delicate allusion in the presence of Deborah Sandwith. The latter had a quarrel of many years’ standing with Mr. Sandwith on this subject owing to his wish to try the treatment on her niece Thomazine, a semi-invalid making her home with her. Hecla hoped if her father had mounted one of his hobbies it was the harmless one of “The Beast,” a monster of his imagining, the body of which represented the Roman Catholic Church, its numerous horns, Democracy, Free Trade and such like civic evils, that he delighted to draw on the back of envelopes for the uninitiated. The iron-master was, however, deep in another topic—the Battle of Armageddon, which he was convinced was to take place not many years hence in the valley of the Mississippi. He was expressing his belief in the voice of one who had received the information from Heaven. Joshua Sandwith, when he began his harangues, had a habit of closing his eyes.

It was perhaps fortunate he did so now, for other-

wise he would have perceived that Benjamin Truelove, seated at his right hand, while listening to his reasons for believing that "the United States was the isle that should wait for God," had his clear eyes fixed on Harmony, who sat almost opposite, unconscious of his earnest regard. She was feeling the letter like a heart-beat in her bosom and longed for the moment when she might lock herself in her chamber and read the words the young seer had written. Even if she had observed the admiration her gentle self excited in him, she would have felt only a wonder that Benjamin Truelove, living on the heights of spiritual life, breathing God's messages, should thus be drawn to earth and earthly attachments. Hecla had placed Hetty next the preacher to please her Aunt Deborah, for she knew she had her niece in contemplation as a suitable helpmeet for him.

Hetty, besides being brought up in strict fashion, was blessed with worldly goods, which to Friend Deborah's thinking added much to the eligibility of the match. But Deborah did not notice that her match-making plans were not succeeding. She was busy expressing to her neighbor, Mrs. Hamilton (whose Calvinism did not prevent her wearing ear-rings with seven little gold balls, hair bracelets and a watch chain of large tortoise-shell links), how firmly she was persuaded that if the situation of the poor African bondmen was not relieved the country would be plagued as ever Egypt for retaining Israel. As Hecla refilled her cup she paused long enough to whisper: "I am disappointed that thy brother David is not with us to-night, Hecla. I had hoped dear Benjamin might have a talk with him ere his departure. I felt a concern to tell him his in-

fluence was a little needed in thy brother's case. I fear thee does not see much of David now. Thy father was not quite wise in letting him live at Mrs. Littlepage's. The associations can hardly be refining or best."

"Don't be distressed, aunt," Hecla returned quickly. "David will be here presently. Thee knows how busy he is. Doubtless something at the Works has delayed him."

David did not, however, put in his appearance, and Hecla sighed as she thought how angered her father would be at his stepson's absence. She was glad to see that he was still engrossed in conversation with Richard Hallett.

The Englishman had been a polite listener to his host's lengthy discourse. The tea-party was to him a novel experience and gave him an insight into the odd customs and ideas of the people among whom he contemplated settling. He was not a religious man. Left early in youth to his own resources and having had scarcely any family life to foster spiritual sentiment, the problems he had had to solve were exclusively of a practical nature. Without being antagonistic to religion he had little or no sympathy with its emotional side. With his firmly-rooted English ideas of morality he respected religion as an educator and as a preserver of society, but its ascetic and mystic phases, represented by such types as Benjamin Truelove and others collected around Joshua Sandwith's table that night, in no wise attracted or impressed him. In his previous meetings with the old iron-master they had talked solely on matters of business, on the mining and economic conditions in England and in America, and Hallett had admired the sterling good sense and knowledge he had displayed. So

it was with feelings of surprise that he listened to what struck him as the extravagant, even ridiculous utterances of his host on the present occasion. He gave, however, his courteous attention to the iron-master's assertion that the Battle of Armageddon was to take place in the Valley of the Mississippi and to other strange interpretations and applications of Old Testament prophecies and obscure passages in Revelation.

But when the talk took another turn and Joshua Sandwith began relating his experiences in locating ore; how he had obeyed the prompting of dreams and had resorted to "wise men" and their hazel wands, Hallett felt the quick exasperation of a student of science. He loved his calling and regarded it too seriously to hear patiently any one confuse geology with visions and *hocus-pocus*. He therefore ventured to remark that perhaps Mr. Sandwith attached too much value to mere coincidence in ore-finding. The comment showed perhaps more candor than tact, and his host was quick to take up the aspersion cast upon his dreaming, of which he was particularly proud.

"So, Friend Hallett, thee has no faith in dreams," he lisped sharply, "and would set thyself up against the plain words of Holy Writ. Has thee forgotten that it is said: *God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not, in a dream, in a vision of the night?* Or perhaps thee is no student of the Scriptures, but prefers thy works of science!"

Hallett flushed a little as he noticed that the iron-master's tones had arrested general attention, and it was in a half-scandalized silence that Deborah Sandwith, Mrs. Hamilton and the others awaited his reply.

"I don't mean to question the value of prophecies and visions in religious matters, Mr. Sandwith," he said quietly, "but ought we to apply the words you quote to dreams of a general sort and make the latter guides in our daily affairs? For instance, geology has taught us a knowledge of the earth's strata, its age and different conditions, and I think we should utilize such knowledge."

"I fear, young man," his host rejoined with heat, "that thy scientific studies have caused thee, like many others, to doubt the truths of Scripture. The present generation thinks itself much smarter than those before it in religious matters. I warrant thee accepts the views of modern science regarding the creation of the world."

"My belief, Mr. Sandwith, is that the story of creation as related in Genesis is symbolic, that the writer—"

"What! Thee actually dares to put thy own interpretations on the Word of God?" Joshua burst forth in growing choler.

Hallett answered calmly: "We do not know how the old Hebrew authors meant their writings to be understood and we are at liberty, therefore, to interpret them according to such light as is provided us. A work that can't be read intelligently can hardly be inspired."

There was something so daring in this statement in the opinion of the pious tea-drinkers at Joshua Sandwith's table that the suspense was extreme as they bided the other's answer. Hecla, who had listened to the dispute with growing concern, most of all wondered if her father's irascibility would lead him to forget the respect due a guest. At this moment attention was distracted by the strange actions of Benjamin True-

love, and the words on the iron-master's lips were never uttered. The young seer had risen from his chair and, standing with outstretched hand, had his eyes fixed on the dining-room door. The expression of his face as he thus stood was so intense, so painful, that a murmur of apprehension arose from the whole circle. It was evident Benjamin Truelove was about to deliver one of his "messages." He remained motionless, his hand raised as if to ward off some specter of ill which he saw with inner eyes. Then he spoke in a clear sonorous voice:

"Ruin approaches this house. Its shadow hath even now fallen upon the threshold!"

The effect of this may be conceived when, as if in confirmation of the prophecy, the door opened and David, flushed with haste, came in. Hecla hardly suppressed a cry, and Joshua, whose sallow skin had paled, exclaimed nervously: "Friend Truelove, what is the meaning of thy words?"

The seer had sunk back into his chair and was slowly passing his hands over his eyes like one awakening out of a trance. At the iron-master's sharp reiteration of his question, he answered in barely audible tones: "A cloud encompasses me; I can see no further."

Hecla, who had recovered her presence of mind, rose from the table and led the way into the parlors, leaving together her father, David and Benjamin Truelove, who still sat in his chair in the exhausted state to which his sudden inspiration had reduced him.

Joshua Sandwith now approached his son who, astonished and indignant at the sensation his arrival had created, remained near the door. "Where has thee been?" he demanded furiously. "Why is thee so late?"

"I came as soon as I could," Dave said sullenly. "What's all this fuss about? One might think I had the plague the way I'm greeted. I guess I'd better have stayed away."

"It had been well if thee had not come," was the reply. The iron-master, like the majority of his guests, interpreted the prediction as a warning that David was to bring ruin on his family. "It had been well indeed!"

"Then if I'm not wanted I'd better take myself off," Dave retorted in offense.

"Thee dares to answer me in such a manner!" Joshua cried hoarsely. "Go, and thee leaves my roof for good!"

"Father, father," Hecla said beseechingly, reëntering the room. She had feared there would be a scene between David and his stepfather. Laying her hand on the iron-master's arm she whispered: "Thee is forgetting Benjamin Truelove!"

When Joshua and his guest had left the dining-room, Hecla said to her brother: "Dave, be careful not to provoke father to-night. He is quite unnerved. Everything has gone wrong. I wish the tea-party had never been given. Come, take thy place at the table and let Hamp bring thee thy supper." Kissing him affectionately she hurriedly returned to the parlors.

She found to her relief that some of the awkwardness caused by the "message" of the young preacher had been dispelled by the cheerful efforts and tact of Doctor Proudfoot. It was nevertheless evident that the company was anxious for an opportunity to discuss the scene that had just taken place, and looks of concern and sympathy were given her. After a minute Richard Hallett came up.

"Miss Sandwith," he said apologetically, "I fear my remarks at table were displeasing to your father. I should not have expressed my opinions so frankly."

"My father gets a little excited over arguments, Mr. Hallett," Hecla answered, "but he is never displeased by the statement of an honest belief. Your ideas are somewhat unusual—I mean for Dunkirk—but they are most interesting; I am sure I found them so."

"You mean the question of the world's creation? Do you care for geology?" Hallett asked not without surprise.

"Yes; I studied geology a little at Lititz and rather liked it. But I do not know," she added with a smile, "if the subject was treated there in a very modern way."

"Lititz,—that's the great Moravian school, is it not? I have heard of it often. The Moravians have an excellent reputation as educators in England."

"They are supposed to be the best instructors here, too. It is strange, isn't it? for they are so narrow in their views of religion. I liked Lititz and the life there, though."

"The Moravians seem to make a deep impression on those they educate," Hallett continued. "My older brother went to school at Neuwied on the Rhine. You know that is one of their important establishments. I was to go there, also, but both my parents died and I had to learn geology—out in the mines!"

"Probably that was the best school of all," Hecla suggested.

"For geology, perhaps," he answered gravely. "But I have often regretted I did not have more school life."

My brother was a splendid young fellow—he died soon after he grew up. He told me so much about Neuwied that I have always taken an interest in the Moravians.”

“You should visit some of their settlements here in Pennsylvania, Mr. Hallett. Bethlehem is particularly worth visiting. They have another large school there.”

“Do you want to send me back to school, Miss Sandwith?” Hallett laughed. “Perhaps you think I need a little Moravian influence in religious matters.”

“I think you’ll find enough religious influence right here in Dunkirk,” she replied with a smile. “But you must be careful how you talk about the teachings of modern science.”

“I have quite scandalized your guests to-night, haven’t I?”

“Some of them, perhaps,” she admitted, and then to dismiss the subject: “You must find Dunkirk very dull.”

“Not at all, Miss Sandwith,” he assured her. “I am too busy for time to hang heavily. Everything is new and interesting to me here, and I have been shown so much kindness. I like Dunkirk, I assure you.”

“I am glad of that, for, after all, one has an affection for one’s native town. You must come to see my father often, Mr. Hallett. He’ll sometimes argue and get excited, but you and he will agree about a great many things—if not about geology. He admires frankness and independence above all things,” she added eagerly. “He may seem furious at being opposed, but he’ll like you none the less for opposing him.”

“You and your father are very congenial, aren’t you? People in Dunkirk have told me so.”

"Yes," she answered proudly, "I admire my father more than anybody else in the world."

"Still harping on 'my father'," Doctor Proudfoot said, coming up in time to hear this last speech. "He is asking for you, Hecla. I believe Friend Truelove is about to take his departure."

"And I must be leaving also, Miss Sandwith," Hallett said. "I hope that we shall have another talk sometime about Lititz and the Moravians."

"Father and I will always be glad to see you at Burnham," she replied as she gave him her hand, although she noticed the disapproving expression of her Aunt Deborah, who had approached to kiss her good night. Hecla knew Mr. Sandwith's tastes and was aware of the favor with which he had regarded the Englishman ever since his first visit to the house. The old ironmaster missed his former busy life, and his daughter had not been slow to see signs of melancholy which increased the frequency and violence of his fits of irritability. It was therefore for his sake that she had put cordiality into the tone with which she gave Hallett the invitation at parting.

The present conversation was the first of any consequence she had had with Hallett and it left her with a feeling of increased interest in him. She believed that he was a strong man, capable of self-control and determination of purpose. She was perhaps more struck with these qualities in him to-night, owing to the emotional experiences through which she had just lived. Hecla had reëntered the parlors, knowing that everybody was thinking and doubtless talking of the prophecy of Benjamin Truelove, and she dreaded lest her Aunt De-

borah or her Unele Gideon should say something about its application to David. Hecla's religious faith had received a shock at the time of her mother's death. She refused to believe a kind God could have willed the destruction of one so gentle and good, and the effect had been to create in her heart a secret doubt of spiritual revelations such as Benjamin Truelove's that were credited by those around her. Startled as she had been that evening by the suddenness of the preacher's "message," she had almost immediately recovered from the instinctive thrill it had caused. She denied to herself that the prediction was inspired, and she was ready to maintain that her stepbrother's arrival at the moment of its delivery was merely an unfortunate coincidence. She realized, however, that she was alone in such an opinion, except in the case of Richard Hallett and Doctor Proudfoot. She had seen what an impression the "message" had made on her father and she knew, too, how much material her relatives would make out of it, since already they distrusted and disliked Dave. Consequently her quiet chat with Richard Hallett had been a real relief and rest.

Benjamin Truelove's going was the signal for a general breaking-up of the tea-party, to each of whom Hecla composedly bade farewell as if nothing had occurred to mar the evening's pleasure.

Joshua Sandwith had counted on having speech with his stepson upon the departure of his guests, but David, after eating his supper, had at once left the house. The iron-master, when he discovered this, relieved his worked-up feelings by lecturing the German factotum, Karl, for some negligence in his day's work; after which

he wound up the Dutch clock in the hall and lit his candle. As he said good night to Hecla he remarked abruptly: "I saw thee talking to Richard Hallett after supper. His religious views are not as sound as they should be, but he is an excellent young man of whose honesty I am confident."

"Father, dear, promise thee won't worry over what Benjamin Truelove said!" Hecla entreated.

"Well, if evil comes to my household, I shall accept it, daughter, and ask no sympathy of the world. Yet I do not deserve trouble of the Lord. I have defrauded no one and the needy never have been turned empty-handed from my door." He sighed as he spoke, pushing his wig back from his brow with a nervous hand.

Hecla kept hold of his drab coat as they stood together at the foot of the stairs.

"Thee has always been kind and good, father," she said, seeking out the homeliest feature of his sallow face and kissing it devotedly, "and thee ought to trust to that." Then she added: "Please don't tell Dave what happened to-night. It will discourage him so!"

And at last her entreaties won his unwilling consent.

Hetty Waln had decided to spend the night at Burnham, and when Hecla and she were up stairs undressing for bed, Hetty, jerking her boots off with characteristic energy, remarked:

"Well, so thy father wants thee to marry that Englishman! If thee does I presume the 'teachings of modern science' won't interfere with thy frivolous tastes!"

"What nonsense you do talk, Hetty!" Hecla answered. She stood in front of the mirror, letting down her hair.

The reflection in the glass showed a face full of melancholy thoughtfulness. Hecla's eyes were wide-set under a smooth brow. She had her father's firm mouth, her mother's fine skin. She often regretted she had no color like her school-friend, Rhoda Markham, whose cheeks burned like a young maple-leaf. At such times Hecla looked at her small well-turned ears: they consoled her for all imagined defects. She inherited these, she believed, from her worldly ancestor, John Jervis, court painter to George III. She knew well the story of the painter and his sister, Lady Bridgewater, whose ears were the only blemish of a beauty eulogized in verse by Alexander Pope. "What is a perfect ear?" Lady Bridgewater had demanded, and the painter, removing his velvet cap and touching one of his own, had answered: "That, ma'am, is a perfect ear."

"Hecla, thee's so vain," Hetty presently continued. "I believe thee is admiring thy ears. I should think thee'd hate them. Small ears mean people are selfish."

Hetty had comfortable feelings on the subject of ears, even if her own had never been compared to "twin brier roses" by Blair Nandine in an "ode." She had not inherited John Jervis' ears, perhaps, but at all events she had his silver tankard and the portrait painted by himself, heirlooms of which she accused Hecla of envying her.

"I don't believe I am so selfish, Hetty," her cousin said in answer to this last criticism.

"Anyway, it's not right to think all the time about thy looks the way thee does. I saw Jane Hamilton counting the flounces on thy skirt to-night. I wonder Benjamin Truelove didn't have a message for thee on

foolish and worldly adornment, as long as he was making himself so disagreeable."

Hecla paid no further attention to her cousin's talk, and that expeditious lady slipped on her nightgown and jumped into bed. "Well, all I can say," she called out in her shrill treble from under the blankets, "is that I hope the prophecy about thy family coming to grief will turn out not to be true! It certainly was meant for Dave, notwithstanding thee's so indignant at my saying so. Anyhow, it's quite decided me not to marry Benjamin Truelove, for if unpleasant things are going to happen I don't want to know beforehand. He can have Harmony if he wants to. Yes, Hecla, there's one thing I have quite made up my mind about," she went on solemnly, bolting up in bed, "and that is never to marry goodness. There's enough goodness in the family already with Aunt Deborah and Uncle Pentecost!"

Hecla had moved to the open window and now stood, a white-robed graceful figure, looking down on the blue moonlit garden. Shadows of the black walnuts guarding the house fell on the turf like great splashes of India ink. Flying squirrels, nocturnal merrymakers, dropped noiselessly from branch to branch and from the meadow stream came the wild silver jangle of mating frogs. The night air was laden with the passionate odor of the honey-locust profusely flowering under the window: floating up it filled the chamber with almost oppressive sweetness.

Hecla mused, holding back the curtain with one white bare arm. She was thinking of all that had taken place that night,—of the prophecy, and her talk with Richard Hallett. Though she refused to believe in the "mes-

sage," it had left her depressed, and out of the sadness of her feelings was born a longing to see her cousin, Wentworth Oliver. His mother had told her that afternoon that he walked his room at night. What troubled him? Was he in love? she asked herself again for the hundredth time. Hecla knew her cousin too intimately to credit her Aunt Seaborn's claim to a perfect understanding of him. Suppose he married Rhoda Markham, as his mother wished. It was a suitable match and ought she not to be glad? Instead she sighed, and her heart felt again sharply the wound of his strange neglect of her.

Dreamily she continued to gaze on the hushed outer world that lay like a rapt ear open to the harmonies of heaven. Above her in the deep violet void she saw the bland moon gleaming, its crystal light shattering among the tender leaves of the grove. The frogs shook the garden quiet with silver choirings, and something in her blood stirred as if in answer. The spring night palpitated with wistful magic; it seemed to thrill with soft appeals and shadowy knowledge of life and love.

Suddenly, as she brooded, beyond the rim of distant hills a lurid red shimmer flooded the sky, mounting to the zenith, making the black branches of the trees stand out like a black net-work. After a few moments the glow gradually died out and Hecla could hear across the distance the heavy sigh of her father's furnace toiling like a Cyclops in the night.

"Come to bed, Hecla," Hetty called out impatiently. "What's the pleasure of standing moping at the moon? Thee knows the guineas make such a fuss in the morning one could as soon sleep with a windlass creaking in

one's ears. And besides, night air gives one diseases. I don't suppose I shall get much sleep anyway after two cups of coffee—I'm sorry now I drank them!"

"You are always being sorry about that, Hetty."

The two cups of mocha Hetty had indulgently sipped at supper kept her mind active as a time-piece. She stirred restlessly under the light fleecy blankets her grandmother Sandwith had woven and bequeathed with strict injunction they should never be used "for the ironing board." The linen sheets held a soothing smell of lavender, but the coarse middle seam rubbed her tender young knees. Hearing Hecla's even breathings she wished she had kept her awake to entertain her. With open eyes she lay meditating on the troubles with her farmers, the liberties of dress Hecla enjoyed, and the incidents of the tea-party.

Presently she fancied she heard a sound of some one in the garden below the window. She listened, then quietly slipped out of bed and parting the curtains took a peep. A white dust of moonlight covered the ground and she could see standing under the trees the blurred figure of a man. Hetty recognized with indignation that this was Blair Nandine, her admirer, who, not satisfied with writing Hecla a poem on her home-coming, had stolen out to serenade her. She glanced at the couch. Hecla was still quietly sleeping. She crept to the bed-side and pulled the curtains to; then with fearful joy lifted the pitcher from the wash-stand and bore it to the window. "Well, I'll settle him and Hecla," she avowed silently, as she prepared to give her faithless lover a douche.

Blair Nandine was close under the window now and a

ray of moonlight glinted on an object he drew from his coat pocket. Hetty, biting her nether lip, waited, holding the jug aslant. At the first sound of the flute complaining on the night air the water descended. Hetty, forgetting herself, laughed aloud.

"What is the matter?" came in drowsy tones from the bed. Hecla leaned on one arm looking at Hetty, whose plump little person stood in a bath of moonlight.

"I heard a man under the window!"

"I hear no one."

"He's gone now."

"Blair Nandine's a fool," Hetty reflected as she climbed back to bed, "but I think perhaps I'd marry him if it weren't for Uncle Gideon's money."

CHAPTER IX

THE BRAIN DEVISES LAWS FOR THE BLOOD

Hecla Sandwith's surprise at her cousin Wentworth Oliver's neglect of her had grown to indignation as the days passed without bringing him to the house again after his first formal call in company with Richard Hallett, the English stranger. Wentworth was her nearest relative on her mother's side, being the son of her Presbyterian aunt, Mrs. Seaborn Oliver, who had paid a tearful visit at Burnham the afternoon of the supper-party given to Benjamin Truelove. Hecla and he had always been on affectionate terms, and their first separation had taken place when Wentworth had departed to the law school at Carlisle and his cousin to Lititz. Wentworth had returned home after finishing his studies and entered into the practice of his profession.

Wentworth was several years older than Hecla and so much resembled her in appearance that the two might well have been taken for brother and sister. Like his cousin, Wentworth represented something of a reaction in character from his environment. He was sprung from a family of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the most unalterable dye, and his passionate nature—which separated him in kind from his ancestors—never could shake off wholly the dead hand of a narrow oppressive conscience.

His father had died when he was a small boy and his mother had undertaken to inculcate in him her own somber views of life.

The Oliver household was a melancholy one, conserving all the sternest ethics of Presbyterianism. Wentworth had been permitted few of the liberties enjoyed by other boys of the town. He had not been allowed to dance or play cards; the drinking of wine was looked upon by his mother as an offense against God and man. On Sundays in the prim parlor, with its blinds drawn down to hide sights of the outside world, he was made to spend the afternoon studying the Five Points of Calvinism while often David Sandwith tantalizingly capered before the window displaying fishing-tackle. And after Wednesday evening prayer-meeting it had been his heroic duty to escort home timid Miss Abby Speakman, the little lame mantua-maker, instead of his boyish admirations. The effect of so rigorous and insistent a religious education had been to nurture the emotional side of his nature—to cause him to feel intensely the beauty and joy of life. Only a consideration for his mother held in check his secretly ripened senses. He was keenly alive to the obligations of a son, and he strove to save lachrymose and melancholy-minded Mrs. Oliver any distress by his actions. His filial patience and self-control were indeed among the most admirable things of Wentworth Oliver's character.

With Hecla's return after two years' absence at boarding-school a disturbing element had entered the young lawyer's life. And it was because he had resolved to see as little as possible of his cousin that he had avoided his uncle's house and refused the invitation to the tea-party

given to the Quaker seer. Wentworth had always been fond of Hecla but it was not until their first long separation that he realized he had for her the feelings of a lover. When he came back from Carlisle and entered into law practice, his cousin was away at Lititz; now she was at home again he felt more than ever how much he loved her.

Wentworth knew all thought of marriage with Hecla Sandwith was idle because of Quaker prejudice against the union of first cousins. Although his Uncle Joshua was not as strict a Friend as his brothers, Pentecost and Gideon, he was well aware that he would not waive this objection to their marriage, and Wentworth owed his uncle too much not to feel bound to consider his scruples. It was he who had paid his expenses at the law school from which he had graduated with honor some eighteen months before; since then his career had been furthered by Joshua Sandwith's influence and advice; and thus from the first he had stepped into an honorable, lucrative practice. So Wentworth, after his visit to Burnham in company with Richard Hallett, had avoided the house, and when invited to the tea-party had pleaded his arduous occupations as an excuse.

A week had elapsed since then. Both Hecla and Wentworth had been invited to a house-party at Moshannon Hall, the remote mountain home of Rhoda Markham, Hecla's school friend, to whom Mrs. Oliver had alluded as a suitable wife for her son Wentworth. The invitation also included Harmony, and a large number of Dunkirk young people, among whom were Hetty Waln, her admirer, Blair Nandine, the Episcopal rector, Mr. Donovan, and Richard Hallett. Wentworth's first in-

clination had been to refuse the invitation, but on mentioning his intention to Mrs. Oliver she had a little surprised him by dissolving into tears. He was working too hard; he did not look well; she heard him pace his room at night when he ought to be sleeping; it was his duty to take more recreation. Though tears were Mrs. Oliver's constant refuge, familiarity with their flow never bred contempt in the feelings of her son. Wentworth hastened to assure her of his willingness to join the riding party to Moshannon Hall if it was her wish that he should go. Mrs. Oliver ceased her weeping at this acquiescence. She had her own private reasons for urging Wentworth to accept the Markhams' invitation—reasons in accord with the plans for her son's welfare she had unfolded to Hecla the day of her call at Burnham. Seeing him seated on his horse the morning fixed for the excursion Mrs. Oliver had pleasing visions of Wentworth's marriage with Rhoda Markham, who she was now satisfied would make him a proper wife. Wentworth's yielding to his mother's wishes was partly based on the conviction that after all it was an act of prudence to take the trip to Moshannon Hall. His absence would doubtless be commented upon; and he did not mean to let Hecla grow suspicious of his avoidance of her, for which reason he had decided also to call at Burnham and fetch Hecla into town where the party was to assemble.

It was a clear May morning when Wentworth started out to his uncle's house. A laggard spring had reached the uplands of Pennsylvania. The tender green which had wreathed the maples before the court-house was deepening into a rich hue. Swallows swept the crystal day with cheerful twitter, and there was a dazzle of

clean sunshine. Notwithstanding the ban he had placed on his love, the young lawyer felt his heart fill with the philosophy of nature, so alien to the rigorous dictates of conscience. As he rode along the hilly streets of Dunkirk, gazing on the town's dull doings, passion asked, Why must he indeed renounce his cousin? Whatever his duty might be, he felt they had been destined for each other. Was happiness or ill fate before him? Was it possible for him to command his instincts, control his sentiments and impulses? What sacrifice life demanded!

As he approached the house he saw that Hecla was already mounted on her yellow mare, Bonnie. She had never seemed more beautiful than to-day as she waited for him, dressed in her well-fitting riding-habit of Saxon cloth, her face shaded by a wide-brimmed hat caught on one side with rosettes and strings and having a flowing black feather. He saw now the unwisdom of attempting to approach her again on the old cousinly footing.

Hecla glanced at him curiously as they turned their horses' heads down the gravel drive under the late-leaving walnuts, the pride of Burnham. She had caught only distant glimpses of her cousin since his call with Richard Hallett and she now noticed that he looked unhappy and ill-at-ease. It softened her feelings of offense at his weeks of neglect, and she interrupted his excuses for not having been to see her by saying gently:

"You needn't apologize, Wentworth! I know how busy you have been. True, I *have* felt hurt about it, but that was foolish. Please tell me about your work! Father says you are getting Uncle Pentecost's old practice."

"Yes, I am beginning to see my way ahead."

Hecla missed something in the tone—the enthusiasm with which he was wont to speak in former days. Her quick glance rested on his spare cheek to which the red Scotch-Irish freckles gave the effect of tan. His blue eyes were fixed in front of him; under his wideawake hat his tawny hair showed—the hair that matched her own. Hecla felt a softening of her heart as she looked at him and she regretted the more her unkind thoughts of him.

"Wentworth," she said, yielding to all her old fondness, "aren't you troubled about something?"

"Why should you think that?"

The manner was defensive and it hurt her a little. "I hardly know," she faltered. "You are not looking well and you seem so different."

"I feel quite well."

They were crossing the rustic bridge that arched the meadow stream and she saw the willow which gave shade to the little island arbor. Wentworth and she had planted the willow sapling just before he left for the law school and it had now grown to a good-sized tree. It struck her afresh how long had been their separation. After all, was not that sufficient explanation for Wentworth's conduct? He had grown to care less for her in her absence!

The horses had whinnied their recognition at the door and as they moved along they kept nuzzling, bringing the bodies of the two riders in contact. Wentworth drew his horse's head back with a quick jerk of the reins. Hecla considered him doubtfully.

"Wentworth, have I offended you in any way?" she asked wistfully.

"No, you have not."

There seemed to Hecla to be a real want of graciousness in Wentworth's short reply. She felt that her overtures were being met so unwillingly that further efforts of the kind would lack self-respect. It was with some stiffness that she said abruptly: "Suppose we give the horses their heads."

She touched Bonnie with her whip as she spoke and they started on a brisk canter which soon brought them to the main street of the town, where before one of a row of plain limestone houses the rest of the party were gathered. They had not spoken after quickening their pace, but as they again drew rein Wentworth started to say something. Hecla, however, interrupted the words by hailing with apparent gaiety her cousin Jane Hamilton.

Jane stood on the horse-block, preparing to mount her steed, assisted by a pleasant-faced young man in clerical garb. "Well," she exclaimed in her cheerful, commonplace voice, "I'm glad to see you so prompt, Hecla. We are making an early start so we'll reach shade before the heat of the day. Tom Brass is as usual behind-hand with 'The Mountain Echo.' Hetty, Harmony, mother and Mr. Donovan will wait for that. You and Mr. Donovan haven't met, have you?" she added. Hecla bowed stiffly to Jane's companion. Her affection for her father led her to absorb many of his prejudices as well as his principles, and one of the former was dislike of "hireling preachers," as he called them. An

Episcopal clergyman was, in Mr. Sandwith's eyes, a papist in sheep's clothing; and one of the biggest horns of "The Beast" he was fond of drawing was labeled "priesthood."

Mr. Donovan acknowledged the bow by saying cordially:

"It is a great pleasure to meet you at last, Miss Sandwith. Your sister and I are already friends."

"Indeed?" was her cool answer. "Harmony has not happened to mention it; but then I have been home such a short time."

The young rector turned away with an angry flush. He admired Harmony and he knew of Mr. Sandwith's strong religious prejudices. In Hecla he had hoped to find an ally.

Hecla was too preoccupied to regret this rude speech. She was still irritated with Wentworth and had no intention of riding any farther with him. Confidence in her attractions assured her that there would be no difficulty in finding an escort on the ride. There was Blair Nandine who had sent her on her home-coming some high-flown verses,—he would hasten to claim the honor of riding with her. To her surprise the village beau, instead of joining her, continued his conversation with the daughter of the county judge. From his dignified greeting Hecla could see that he was for some reason deeply offended with her. A little discomfited she glanced about her, for the party was moving off, and with a sense of relief caught sight of Richard Hallett making his way toward her. He reached her side and, thus escorted, Hecla urged her horse in advance of the others without noticing Wentworth.

The clatter of the passing cavalcade brought curious citizens to door and window. From the center of the town they turned into a quiet side street where the limestone houses were less closely adjoining. These had solid stone walls inclosing small front yards high above the flagged pavement, with long flights of stone steps leading to the doorways. Over the walls hung snowballs, currant bushes and trumpet vine. The garden beds with their old-time flowers and herbs were neatly bordered with box.

Leaving Dunkirk they struck the great "trading road" over which in spring and fall Conestoga wagons lumbered, railroads not having pushed aside the old turnpike traffic. The road led through a water-gap into a neighboring valley. There the eye caught a vision of blue mountains, range shouldering range until they melted in the loftier heights of the Alleghanies. Climbing peach orchards patched the hillsides, and along the pike bladed corn-fields spread or meadows pied with cowslips and wild carrot flowering into Mechlin lace. Overhead was the blue heaven. Plumps of rain had quieted the dust and a light breeze stirred the drooping pines.

Hecla was a good horsewoman and she was conscious, as they moved through the cheerful May day, that she looked her best. From the first she had been aware of Richard Hallett's admiration and it had pleased her vanity; but to-day her reaction against Wentworth disposed her to kindlier feelings. There was a dignity in the Englishman's bearing she liked: it expressed a type of manhood different from that to which she was accustomed.

"I did not know you were to be of our party," she

began. "Father tells me you have been visiting the coal mines at Snow Shoe. I am glad, though, you found time to join us on our trip."

"It is not only for pleasure I am one of you," he answered candidly. "I made a brief stay at Moshannon Hall last week, and Mr. Markham asked me to come out again, promising to show me over his property. I timed my going, however, so as to ride out with your party."

"You've always been interested in coal mines, have you not?" There was a flattering quality in her fine voice as she asked the question.

"Yes, I have devoted my life to it. I was born in the great coal district of England, and no doubt my surroundings gave me my taste for the work."

"I hope you aren't disappointed in central Pennsylvania?"

"No, indeed, Miss Sandwith; I think the country wonderfully promising. I feel there is no end to the possibilities of its mining industries. I can't understand why the Snow Shoe Coal Company was so easily discouraged. You have to expect difficulties in business as in life. They should act as a tonic." He spoke with quiet enthusiasm; and while the tone was confident, Hecla felt there was no boastfulness in the remark. She looked at him with a responsive show of interest, and the Englishman continued:

"I don't see how your Dunkirk business men can help realizing that the success of Snow Shoe means prosperity and wealth for the town. With great coal fields a few miles distant, Dunkirk would become an active industrial center; I believe them practically inexhaustible."

Hecla met this with a smiling response. "That's what

my father often says. He is always dreaming of finding coal in Snow Shoe."

"Don't you think, Miss Sandwith," Hallett said after a moment, "that your father's dreams and belief in 'wise men' come from his secret convictions? He has had great practical experience in locating ore-mines, I understand."

"Perhaps they do, Mr. Hallett, but unconsciously; father is very honest and sincere." She hesitated, then she said: "It must seem strange to you to hear Friends talk so much about dreams and prophecies; but you know our belief in such things is very genuine—genuine and very unfortunate." She spoke earnestly and not without bitterness, for Benjamin Truelove's "message" was still painfully in her thoughts.

"I think predictions seldom prove a benefit," was the answer. "If success is promised it makes us overconfident; if failure, it's depressing and perhaps the cause of the failure predicted. Encouragement is always better than warning."

Hecla felt this to be a reference to her brother David and the prophecy of Benjamin Truelove. It seemed to her, indeed, that it justly summed up the situation, so far as Dave was concerned. He had always had to contend against public opinion, especially against the disapproval both of his Quaker step-relatives and his mother's equally narrow-minded Presbyterian kin. Her father, too, had had little patience with the boy's unruly independent nature, and was frequently as severe with him as at other times he was indulgent. Hecla had always been the one to defend him against imputations of wildness and incapability. She well knew that

Benjamin Truelove's unfortunate prophecy at her father's supper-table had added fuel to the fire of this disfavor and that her uncles and aunts, indeed Dunkirk gossip generally, must have taken satisfaction in the apparent confirmation by the Quaker seer of their prejudice and ill-feeling regarding Dave. She had no belief in the "messages" and "prophecies" which were so much a part of Quakerism, but she knew her father had, and she dreaded the effect Benjamin Truelove's words might have on him in connection with her brother and his management of the Works. She was therefore glad to have Hallett speak as he did, and she determined to take advantage of the turn in the conversation to say a word in Dave's defense, feeling that Hallett's interest and good will might some day be valuable to her brother.

"I agree with you, Mr. Hallett," she answered. "I think these latter-day prophecies ridiculous and dangerous and cruel in so many instances. What, for instance, could have been more harmful than what you heard at our table, when my stepbrother's arrival was greeted by Benjamin Truelove's prediction that he was to cause the ruin of the family?"

"I feel as you do, Miss Sandwith," Hallett said warmly, "and I can tell you that instead of prejudicing me it made me feel most sympathetic and friendly toward your brother."

"I am glad of that," she gratefully answered. "My brother has little encouragement and many to find fault with him."

"You are as devoted a sister as you are a daughter." Hallett's voice showed his admiration. The tone and look he gave her awakened in Hecla a feeling that the

conversation had been on far too intimate a plane, considering how much of a stranger the Englishman was to her. Somehow, she felt she had yielded unrecoverable ground, and instantly an inimical instinct of sex began fighting against the established nearness. Richard Hallett emanated an atmosphere that caused some blind quality in herself to stir apprehensively. She glanced at him and realized anew how much his appearance symbolized his strength and self-sufficiency of character. The large hands intimated a tenacious grasp of things. Here was a man who sustained himself and his ideas without need of the world's support or indorsement.

Something positive in her nature found satisfaction in the claim many made on her sympathies. She was accustomed to her father's dependence on her, and in former years Wentworth Oliver had paid her the tribute of confiding in her. And she found herself confiding in Richard Hallett, drawing from him aid and comfort. The experience was new and it hurt her pride, diminished her feeling of independence. With sudden tenderness she thought of Wentworth—Wentworth, whose deferring attitude flattered her into the belief that he offered her womanhood a vocation. She blamed herself for taking offense so easily at his words, and she wished she had listened to what he had attempted to say as they joined the others at Jane Hamilton's steps. With growing curiosity and unrest she wondered with whom Wentworth was riding. She could hardly listen to what Richard Hallett was saying. At last her eyes fell on a wayside spring and she asked:

"Mr. Hallett, will you get me a drink of water?"

She knew the rest of the party were not far behind and that in joining them again the atmosphere of intimacy would be in a measure dispelled. As she waited she tried to catch a glimpse of Wentworth and his companion.

The riding party made a noonday stop at The Rattlesnake, an inn much frequented by Dunkirk parties, standing on a bench of the Alleghanies where it commanded one of the fine views of the county. Ben Lucas, the innkeeper, was known as "a good provider," and the hungry travelers did ample justice to the dinner he set before them.

After dinner Hetty, to whom the trip had offered opportunity for indulging her mischievous spirits, begged Mr. Blair Nandine to treat them to a Shakespeare recitation. Mr. Nandine impersonating Romeo was always an occasion for mirth, and Hetty endeavored to make the present performance as ridiculous as possible. She draped her admirer with a Paisley shawl borrowed from Mrs. Hamilton, and stuck in his hat a feather plucked from the tail of a stuffed peacock ornamenting the parlor mantel-piece. Then she arranged chairs to represent the orchard wall, hoping that Mr. Nandine would have a mishap, as frequently chanced when he attempted the leap. With poor plain-looking Jane Hamilton coaxed into consenting to play Juliet, Hetty felt that the entertainment would be quite complete.

As she retreated into a corner to enjoy the result of her efforts she met Harmony, who was quietly leaving the room on the plea of a headache. Hetty whispered to Mr. Donovan that she feared her cousin was not well

and with a little smile watched him through the window following her in the direction of the spring.

The young rector found Harmony seated by a mossy trough, into which the waters of a hillside spring gushed with a pleasant sound. A wealth of wild azaleas formed a background, its rosy bloom bee-haunted and honey-fragrant. Over her head leaning branches cast their shade and the spot was full of the drowsy lisp of forest leaves. Harmony had been bathing her head with her handkerchief dipped in the icy water of the spring, and was now fallen into a reverie. She looked up, slightly startled at Mr. Donovan's approach.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked. "I heard from Miss Hetty you were threatened with headache; but I half suspect you fled the levities in the parlor."

"I thought I should not much care for the recitations," she answered. "It isn't quite right, is it, to make people ridiculous, which I fear was the purpose in asking Mr. Nandine to recite—although I should hardly say that."

"And have you not a headache?"

"A slight one. But I am accustomed to headaches." She said it quietly, without appeal for sympathy.

"Let me tie a handkerchief around your head," he suggested. "No, I have a better idea. I used to banish pain by the exercise of the will. Let me try with you. Give me your hand, please. Now that establishes what is called a 'current.' Then I concentrate my mind on the headache. If I don't take it away altogether I shall at least be able to absorb part of it myself. You know the Scripture bids us share each other's burdens."

Harmony had withdrawn the hand Mr. Donovan had

taken, and at this application of the Gospel she looked at him a little doubtfully, thinking he might be jesting.

"Thank you, but it is not necessary," she faltered. "I shall be better if I merely sit here for a while."

"But do let me try," he urged. "At all events, it can do no harm." He again secured her unwilling hand and composed his face as if with an effort to summon up his will power. "Let your mind relax as much as possible," he commanded; "that will assist the cure."

Harmony endeavored to obey, but her heart beat quickly with embarrassment and over her an usurping influence crept that was strangely sweet. She had a shy drawing toward the frank-faced young Irishman whom she had met from time to time at her cousin, Jane Hamilton's, and she enjoyed talking to him about his work in the lumber-camps and other rude settlements around Dunkirk. After a few moments, she made another effort to withdraw her hand, but he would not relinquish it. And so they sat silent together under the swaying forest boughs.

Meanwhile Hecla, who had not seen her stepsister since the beginning of the recitation, was looking for her. Hetty observing this, asked innocently: "Is thee looking for thy sister, Hecla? I think thee'll find her out at the spring being made love to by Mr. Donovan."

"How foolishly you do talk, Hetty!" said Hecla impatiently as she left the room.

Her step as she approached the spring on the soft moss-carpeted path made no sound and Mr. Donovan and his patient did not see her until her voice caused

them to look up. Hecla stood a few feet away, trying to repress her amazement.

She said composedly, however: "Harmony, it is time to get ready to start."

Her stepsister rose. "I am ready," she replied. Then addressing Mr. Donovan: "Thank you very much for your kindness." She joined Hecla, and the sisters, followed by the rector, whom Hecla ignored, turned toward the hotel.

"I had no intention of spying upon you, Harmony," Hecla said stiffly when they were alone; "but really I can hardly credit what I saw. You know how father feels toward Mr. Donovan. How can you permit such liberties?"

Harmony did not answer.

"You have accepted Mr. Donovan, I suppose?"

"He has not spoken," Harmony replied faintly.

"And you let him hold your hand?"

"Mr. Donovan was trying to relieve my headache."

"That is a new method of curing headaches," Hecla answered sarcastically. "If you feel so badly, do you think it wise to continue the trip? If you want to go back I am sure Doctor Proudfoot will be glad to take you in his gig. He is here at the inn on his way to Dunkirk."

"Perhaps it would be better," was the answer. "You know I only came because you urged it."

Hecla went into the inn to find Doctor Proudfoot. She was astonished at Harmony's impropriety, and angered over this intimacy that she knew her father would so bitterly resent. In arranging for Harmony's return she would save her, she reflected, from the dangerous

society of the rector and thus blight in the bud a friendship of which she had first heard from Mr. Donovan that morning as they started forth.

In the hall she met Wentworth Oliver.

"Hecla," he said with some restraint, "I'm sorry I offended you this morning."

"And I regret I was so hasty with you, Wentworth."

"You are going to ride with me the rest of the way, aren't you?"

"Unfortunately, some one else has asked me!"

"I thought, Hecla, it was understood we were to ride together."

"Your manner hardly made me think you wanted to," she answered. Then fearing she had given offense she added: "I am sorry, Wentworth, that I promised some one else."

"Oh, very well," was the reply; and it seemed to Hecla there was relief in the tone.

She bit her lip as she turned away, vowing as she did so that during their stay at Moshannon Hall she would treat him as he deserved.

CHAPTER X

AN UNLESSONED GIRL

During their three days' stay at Moshannon Hall Hecla persisted in treating her cousin with aloofness and permitted herself to be usurped by Richard Hallett. She had perhaps counted on this arousing Wentworth's emotion, but he had appeared not to care and had devoted himself to Rhoda Markham, his host's daughter. Evidently, Hecla reflected as she watched this intimacy, he was obeying his mother's wishes. The pain of this—pain she did not analyze—caused her to show more graciousness to the Englishman than doubtless she realized.

She was aroused to an uneasy sense of her imprudence when, on the day of their departure from the Hall, Richard Hallett invited her to ride with him. His manner implied that he took it for granted he was to be her escort. She would have declined, but no one else had asked her, and some of Hecla's old admirers were of the party; so she could not help seeing Hallett's courtship was generally acceded. Hecla was angry and mortified at the situation in which she found herself involved, and blamed herself for encouraging the Englishman quite as severely as she had blamed Harmony for the scene with Mr. Donovan at The Rattlesnake.

She had hoped that in spite of their avoidance of each other during their stay with the Markhams, Wentworth would ride part of the way home with her, and it increased her illogical resentment toward Hallett to see her cousin take his place beside Rhoda, who was accompanying them back to Dunkirk, where she was to be Jane Hamilton's guest.

During the morning's ride it became more and more evident how seriously Hallett had taken her graciousness; for, unfamiliar as he was with women and their ways, he had not suspected for a moment that he had been used as a foil.

Hallett had now resolved to press his suit, and though not a vain man he had confidence he would win Hecla, as he had succeeded in many other ambitions in life. His inspection of the regions round Moshannon Hall satisfied him that they were rich in minerals, and Mr. Markham in their talks had not only encouraged him to settle in the county, but had shown himself disposed to enter into business relations with him. The result of the three days' visit was that the Englishman decided to remain and invest his little capital in coal fields. Having thus concluded to cast his lot among the people of Dunkirk, he felt himself justified in proposing to the iron-master's daughter.

As they rode along Hallett realized that, though Hecla seemed to regard him with favor, the moment was not propitious for speaking of his love. The hope of making her his wife, nevertheless, had its effect upon a habitual reserve, and he talked with some freedom of his life and his plans for the future. These confidences alarmed the girl, coming as they did from a man of

Hallett's character, and she enveloped herself in a mantle of remoteness. Sentimentally untouched though she was by his words, she found her interest compelled and her imagination stirred by the strength of character they suggested. Her respect and intellectual admiration for Hallett increased, and she confessed that he was gaining power over her. She determined that henceforth she would be careful to keep him as much as possible at arm's length; and she was relieved when at length The Rattlesnake Inn was reached and the ride with him was over.

The day was hot and the party did not leave the inn until late in the afternoon. As the horses were being saddled Hecla sought Wentworth Oliver and, with something of the old frankness which had existed between them, asked him to be her escort to Dunkirk. She did this not only because she was determined to escape the attentions of Richard Hallett, but also because she felt the misunderstanding between her cousin and herself must end; for, after all, Wentworth was more to her than the preservation of pride.

The party started forth as the golden day, shattered into dancing stars by leaves overhead, began to decline. The early twilight of the mountains followed, giving the air of the shady road the green vagueness of sea water. Above them sheer walls of granite loomed in superb sky-lines, where spiring pines etched themselves against a suffused orange light. The riders, fatigued with the hard journey, moved along slowly. A solemn silence weighed on the woods, which their voices seemed to profane like laughter in cathedral aisles. Through the brooding stillness could be heard only the hollow

barking of squirrels, tap of woodpecker, or the sad strophe of some lone hymning bird.

The narrow road twisted and turned in endless descent. Sometimes it hung over vast precipices that, through breaks in meshing vines, showed far below wild seas of foliage. Sometimes they glimpsed vistas rich in dryadic romance, with their silver birches, shining pools and soft flooring of ferns. Piled-up boulders by the roadside seemed gray altars reared to forgotten gods. Here and there banks of laurel bloom shimmered in the dusk. The damp air was bitter with forest decay and rank odor of orchids and sulphur-hued fungi flaring on mossy logs.

Wentworth began by talking of trivial things, and Hecla felt the mockery of this almost like physical heart-ache. The realization of the sadness of life mounted in her as their horses stumbled along the rocky path. The woods, clothed in their twilight mystery, made this exchange of commonplaces unbearable. She glanced at him in the growing gloom, and it seemed to her no one could be more lovable. The memory of past years, the hundred confidences they had shared, all this swept over her. She determined the barrier between them should be broken down. Laying her hand gently on his arm, she said at last:

"Wentworth, tell me what has happened since I left home to change you so."

"How have I changed?" he asked reservedly.

"You are not at all your old self. You acted strangely the first evening you called with Mr. Hallett, and you treat me now as though I had offended you. I know I've given you some cause to feel offense dur-

ing the last few days, but indeed I couldn't help being hurt by your manner. Still it was foolish, I admit." She hesitated, then said in softer tones: "I am sorry I treated you unkindly at the Hall."

"You didn't treat me unkindly."

"Oh, if you didn't notice or feel it!" she retorted with reawakened pique. Her tenderness conquered, however, and she went on:

"Wentworth, let's stop talking like strangers, or as if we were simply on polite terms with each other. Life, ah, life is too short and sad for quarrels and misunderstandings, too short for those who love each other ever to grow cold. I have been wrong, foolish, what you will; but I ask you now to tell me frankly what is the matter. We are cousins—have you forgotten that?"

"Cousins, yes; I wish we were not."

She looked her reproach and pain. "How can you say that?" she protested. "You must know how it wounds me to have you say such things. I can hardly believe two years could so have changed you. Why," she cried, her voice trembling, "there's no one except my father I love so much. I came back thinking what happiness there would be in seeing you again."

He tried to interrupt her, but she went on unheedingly:

"You mistake me in thinking I blame you for caring for others. I want you to care for others; it is natural and right you should; but is that a reason for no longer caring for me?"

"I do care, Hecla," he broke out.

"If you cared, you would give me your confidence," she answered quickly. "I know you are in trouble or in

love." She faltered over the last word. "In either case you wrong me to doubt my sympathy. If you care for Rhoda, why conceal it from me? Who is more interested in your life than I am?"

"I am not in love with Miss Markham."

"Then it's some one else," she persisted; "some girl, perhaps, you met when you were away at the law school."

"Stop," Wentworth angrily interrupted her, "you've no right to probe this way. You torment me, trying to drag my feelings to light. Everybody has reserves, matters they can not discuss with others."

She looked at him with such a wounded face that he broke out impetuously:

"Forgive me for seeming so unkind." As she did not answer he added in desperation:

"We must not see each other any more."

"Not see each other?" she echoed. "Why should we not see each other? You mean you don't wish it?"

"Hecla, you make things hard for me."

"Make things hard for you?"

"You must understand—don't you, Hecla?"

She did not answer. Her face was hidden, but he knew she was struggling to control her tears. The nuzzling horses had drawn them close; her hand lay against the pommel of the saddle and he caught it. Then he leaned over and kissed her. Suddenly releasing her, he sat up straight in his saddle, holding the reins in a hard grip. After a moment's silence, Hecla said faintly:

"You shouldn't have done that—even if you are my cousin."

"It was hardly a cousinly kiss," he answered bitterly.

The horses' hoofs striking the rocks that had bitten through the road was the only sound. It was quite dusk now and the air was chill. He felt she was trembling.

"Forgive me, Hecla, I love you!"

"Why should you not? I am your cousin." But her voice failed her.

"You know what I mean. I love you as a man loves the woman he wants to marry."

"You—you care for me that way?"

"And don't you care that way, too?"

"How can you think it!"

"You've often seemed to."

"Seemed to! You know I never did!"

"Hecla, is that true?"

With an instinct to leave him she struck her horse. It started forward with a spring, and Wentworth, pushing after, grasped her bridle in time to save her from a fall.

"Listen, Hecla," he pleaded; "don't be offended. I never meant to tell you this. But you know now why I've kept away from you!"

They had reached a sharp bend of the road, where a sudden twinkle of lights met them. A log school-house stood near-by, and a band of mountaineers' children were on their way home carrying torches of rich pine to guide them through the dark tangling forest. The two riders halted until the little procession disappeared in the depths of the wood-path. The lights flickered and died out among the leaves and the returning gloom seemed to sink more heavily on their spirits.

Then Hecla spoke in a voice full of sadness:

"Ah, Wentworth, you ought not to have done me such

injustice. Why, oh, why did you tell me you love me?"

"I tried to keep from telling," he answered; "but you accused me of coldness and indifference. I couldn't stand that!"

"You acted so oddly. It was only natural I should have asked the reason!"

They rode on a while.

"Then you don't wish me to love you?" he said at last.

"Wentworth," she appealed, "have you considered what this means? How do you suppose my father would feel if he knew?"

"I have thought of little else since you came home. Do you imagine I haven't fought with myself? If you understood how I have suffered you wouldn't judge me so harshly. Night after night I have walked the floor, unable to sleep, trying to put the thought of you away from me. Hecla, it isn't wrong for us to love each other. It is only because I owe Uncle Joshua so much I have tried to respect his wishes and feelings. If it were a question of your happiness, too, it would be different. I shouldn't let a prejudice, a mere prejudice, stand between our happiness. After all, love is the only thing in life. It ought to come first."

"When you say that it isn't your best self that speaks. You know duty must always come first! Happiness for me? Ah, Wentworth, what happiness would I find if I married you without considering my father? No matter how much I loved you I couldn't do that. No, we should have no peace or self-respect if we did what we felt was unworthy of us."

The foot of the mountain was reached. It was evening now. Through a great gateway of pines they could

catch sight of the spreading valley filmed with silvery mist. In front of them ran the dusty road—a wandering white line between meadows fragrant with dew-beaded clover. Here and there the bluish gloom was pierced with farm-house lights shining like lonely stars. Above the shoulder of a shadowy hill a slip of moon washed into the thin emerald air.

They walked their horses for a long time without words. At length Wentworth said:

“There is a great relief in having told you. Hecla, if you only loved me! It would be so much easier to struggle, knowing it was for the sake of both.”

“No, Wentworth,” she murmured mournfully, “if I loved you it would only make things harder.”

It was one of life’s moments that make or mar character. As they rode along side by side they felt the sadness and solemnity of this crisis in their youth.

When they reached the house she said: “Wentworth, you must not see me for a long time. Promise that you won’t come near me.”

She stood lingeringly on the porch until the echo of his horse’s hoofs died in distance; then she quickly opened the door and went up stairs to her own room not letting the family know of her arrival. Sitting down before her desk, she buried her face in her clasped hands. She had sent him away; it would be months perhaps before she saw him again. Memories like clods dropping on a coffin seemed to bury her happiness in an irreclaimable past. Why was he so dear to her? How cruel life was to deny him to her!

Hecla knew there was no prejudice more deeply rooted among Friends than their view regarding the mar-

riage of first cousins; that in the eyes of her Sandwith kin to be Wentworth's wife would seem living in sin. Those who defied the Discipline were put out of Meeting, were ostracized, disgraced. But it was not this that affected Hecla. She thought of her father; she remembered only her respect for him and his respect for her. It was her knowledge of how he would look upon Wentworth's love that mattered. Her father leaned upon her, trusted her, believed in her; and she would make any sacrifice rather than disappoint him or give him sorrow.

As she sat there her brooding glance fell on the bundle of letters Wentworth had written her while she was at boarding-school. She drew it forth and let the letters scatter on her lap. How like bubbles they were, risen from depths of unsuspected passion! She had read them many times, seeking some cause to explain their brevity, their commonplaces, their lacks which had so pained her. Now what did they not tell her of secret struggle and restraint! Bitterly she blamed herself for her conduct during her stay at Moshannon Hall, for her small fevers of pique since her return from school. Was it a proof that she already loved her cousin? Was it, as he had said, that she had all along unwittingly revealed her true sentiments for him? Against the belief that she loved Wentworth she shut her eyes with desperate resolution. No, it was not so; she did not love him. Yet she trembled as his kiss repeated itself on her lips.

Through the open window came the voices of the whippoorwills that haunted Burnham in the springtime. They were calling each other through the lonely reaches

of the night. A feeling of desolation came over her as she listened. She had been too young to know what sacrifices fate exacts; too inexperienced to understand that the first law of life is the renunciation of what is sweetest, closest to the heart. She had been only a girl, but this trouble had awakened the woman in her, matured her, made her strong. She would crush out of her heart any feelings she might have for Wentworth, and she would help him overcome his love for her. As if to seal her vow of duty by some outward act, she carried the letters to the grate, and kneeling, struck a match, then watched how they curled and blackened.

She rose from her knees with a sense of having taken her heart out of her breast and burned it, too, with the letters. And it was with a sigh that she moved over to the window and stood there for a while musing. She could see faintly in the starlight the road winding under the walnut trees and on over the meadow to Dunkirk. Wentworth had reached home. What was he doing now? Had he, too, conquered—accepted the lesson of life's renunciations?

The whippoorwills had gradually approached the house and their accusatory music rose from the darkness like a tragic chorus, hoarse with passion. The prophecy of Benjamin Truelove, which Hecla had refused to believe in, recurred to her now with a superstitious thrill. The whippoorwills seemed to take it up and repeat it over and over. Alas, life was full of trouble and sorrow. Why should their shadow not fall upon her father's roof? And how was she going to face the misfortunes that might come? Her father depended upon her. She was mother to Little Jervis; and the thought came that

here was compensation for all she renounced. It was to her family she owed her life.

With sudden impulse she crossed the hall softly to the room next her father's, where Jervis lay. She found him asleep on his trundle bed and evidently dreaming, for there was a grave smile on his serious small face. She watched him a moment, then stooping down, pressed a kiss on his lips—a kiss that was a consecration of herself to those for whom her cousin was renounced.

CHAPTER XI

PATHS SET IN DARKNESS

It was a few days after the return of the riding party from Moshannon Hall that Harmony was climbing the steep main street of Dunkirk on her way to her Aunt Deborah Sandwith's. As she passed Mrs. Tatham's boarding-house she caught sight of Mr. Donovan coming out of the deep Dutch doorway. With a slight embarrassed bow she was hurrying on when he, crossing the street, overtook her. She had not seen him since their parting at Rattlesnake Inn. Ever since that day she had accused herself of impropriety in letting the young rector hold her hand. She feared that he regarded her now with less respect.

"I hope you are quite well again, Miss Harmony," he said.

The reference to her headache brought new shyness, and she answered that she was quite well.

"You do not often come to town?"

"Not very often."

"So I never see you."

She made no response to this, knowing she could not invite him to her home on account of her father's prejudice. She had formerly taken pleasure in their accidental meetings at Jane Hamilton's "steps"; now Har-

mony avoided her cousin's house for the very reason of these encounters. They appeared to her wrong since her sister Hecla's harsh reproof. Moreover, Harmony had been passing through spiritual crises that kept her in her room apart even from her family. Mr. Donovan glanced at the sweet pale face framed in the chip bonnet with the wreath of pink rosebuds she wore reluctantly to please Hecla. He noted her troubled expression and the brown eyes shadowy from sleepless nights of prayer.

"I hope," he said earnestly, "that a difference of religion is not going to interfere with our friendship?"

They had reached her Uncle Pentecost's doorstep, and he held out his hand.

"It can make no difference," she murmured.

She withdrew her hand slowly from his lingering warm clasp. As she entered the house her conscience rebuked her: she knew she was glad she had on her new bonnet, and she was sorry she had not withdrawn her hand more quickly.

Harmony mounted the stairs in search of her aunt. Friend Deborah Sandwith was laying out her fragrant household linen in the long mahogany high-boy in the upper hall. She took the bunch of tea-roses her niece had brought her with the reminiscent smile which freshly touched Harmony to-day. Harmony guessed that her Aunt Deborah had some youthful romance in which this variety of rose had played a part, since she wore one hidden in her bosom whenever the roses could be had.

The Quakeress had late in life married Pentecost Sandwith, leaving her Philadelphia home for the un-

congenial life of Dunkirk. For some years she had been "an approved minister," and it was partly through her influence her husband had also come to take his seat on the upper bench of the gallery in the old Sandwith Meeting House. After Pentecost became a preacher he had, through increase of "conscientious scruples," given up the law in which he had won the name of "Honest Pentecost." Many changes had since then been instituted in the household. The gilt mirrors over the fire-place had been substituted by cheap walnut ones. Instead of carrying a gold repeater Pentecost contented himself with a plain silver watch. In Harmony's opinion there was no more ideal pair of Christian livers than her uncle and aunt; and it was with this feeling she had sought Friend Deborah that afternoon for religious counsel.

Yet when the linen was laid away, and they were seated together, she found it difficult to speak. Harmony had almost a morbid reserve in matters touching her spiritual life. She looked hesitatingly at her aunt—a round matronly figure of calm Christian content. The girl's serious large eyes were marked with her mood. She had taken off her bonnet, and with it had departed a certain freshness of youth. Her hands, delicate and tapering, were clasped tightly in her lap.

"I am under such deep discouragement," she said at length.

Her aunt, who had been placidly plying her needles, laid down her knitting. "Open thy concern to me, dear child," she responded in her kind, even voice.

"I have been passing through so many exercises since Benjamin Truelove visited our Meeting. It seemed the

Lord directed him that First day to speak directly to my state. I fear, though, I am too great a sinner: God will not accept me as His child."

"Has thee truly given thyself to Him, Harmony?"

"I have tried to do so, aunt."

The Quakeress was not so confident of Harmony's perseverance as a Christian traveler. "Perhaps thee has not prayed enough," she suggested.

"I have prayed, but it is all so dark."

Harmony did not tell her aunt of the long hours on her knees in which she had prayed with the passion of a medieval penitent. There was something about Deborah's comfortable holiness that checked the shy outpouring of her trouble. Instinct told her that her aunt would never understand her.

"Thee is in a lowness that comes to all seekers after righteousness," was the reply. "Thee must try, Harmony, to cultivate a firmer trust in the Lord. It is wrong and weak of thee to despair. There is no danger that He will not recognize thee as His child unless it is thy own wilful choice."

Harmony then told her aunt of a dream she had had the night before. She thought she was in a strange place and a figure of pleasant and superior appearance had given her a stone pitcher. He led her to a river and bade her follow the example of others and fill her pitcher with water. She did so, but each time she withdrew it the water bubbled over the top until the pitcher was empty. She continued to refill it until her arms ached and always with the same result.

Her aunt sat silent, considering the meaning of the dream. Like most old-time Friends, she had faith in

the teaching of the Spirit by night visions. The dream seemed to indicate that her niece was a vessel unworthy as yet to hold the boon of grace. But she had no wish to break the bruised reed or quench smoking flax.

"Thee may be wrong, dear child," she said, "in attaching importance to the vision. Dreams are not always intended for our guidance."

Harmony, however, divined her aunt's concealed thought: her face took on an expression of melancholy, and she thought it useless to talk more on the subject. She fell back on her own strength to bear her problem.

After a few moments her aunt remarked: "I have heard from Benjamin Truelove since his going and he wishes his dear remembrance to be given the unknown writer of the letter with the earnest hope she may increase in heavenly favor." As she read the words her eyes dwelt musingly on her niece.

"Tell me, Harmony," she asked, "is thee still heart-whole?"

"Yes, aunt, I think so," was the faltering answer.

Deborah laid her hand on the girl's arm. "Thee should confide in thy aunt," she said, "since thee has no mother."

Friend Deborah's mind was full of Benjamin Truelove. Her barren motherhood went out to the young evangelist. She had desired a union between him and Hetty, but this she feared would come to naught. Hetty had told her, the day after the tea-party at Burnham, she had no wish to marry the young Quaker seer. Now Deborah considered Harmony, thinking it might be that a concealed fancy for Benjamin Truelove was leading her to more serious spiritual aspirations. If this were so,

and Harmony became a Friend, would she make a wife truly fit for the one she so fondly loved?

She would have said more, when both were startled by the sound of music awakening for the first time its echoes in the house. The words died on the elder woman's lips and the two remained mute in wonder.

After a few uncertain bars there floated to their ears an old Scotch air tenderly but faultily played. Harmony saw her aunt's face tremble, whether because of stirring memories or the searching pathos of the strain, she could only guess. Then some heart-break of her own brought tears to her eyes. Deborah rose, and drawing Harmony with her, descended the stairs and paused at the threshold of the sitting-room.

Pentecost Sandwith was not conscious of their presence. He sat on a chair with a violin pressed against his aged cheek, his eyes closed and a faint smile upon his lips. He had been cleaning out the contents of a chimney closet, which contained the rubbish of years on its high shelves, and among this he had found the violin he had played in his youth before the stern convictions of Quakerism caused him to lay it aside. Evidently he had debated over the disposal of this token of former folly so long forgotten; had perhaps merely touched it to see if the strings retained some of their fine tone after years of neglect, and so unconsciously had fallen to playing one of his chosen Scotch tunes. The June day streamed through the slats of the green Venetian shade in filtered dust of gold, and the light gave reverence to the grave rugged face, with its loose folds of skin like a mastiff's muzzle.

Deborah Sandwith, standing at the threshold of the

room, had her eyes fixed on her husband's smiling lips,—flash of a transient springtime returned, rapt illumination of a heart that through all suppression of religious faith still confessed allegiance to melody. Often had the same expression shone on pure faces of male and female preachers in Meeting as they uttered rhapsodies in rhythmic voices, testifying to an unacknowledged truth that those banded together to oppose the vanity of the World were after all musicians in spirit, who, moved to words of mystic exaltation, fell naturally into chanting phrases that came down to them through the ages from David praising the Lord with harp and timbrel.

An irrepressible exclamation broke from Deborah Sandwith. At the sound the musician's eyes opened, and in the bewildered awakening the bow dropped from his hand. He picked this up, and laying it beside the violin, closed the case; then he sat with his head, white-haired and nobly large, bowed for a space. And in respect for this humility before the Lord the two women neither moved nor spoke. Into their minds, however, came thought of the long estrangement between Pentecost and his brother Joshua because of the spinet in the parlors at Burnham.

Presently the old preacher rose, and going to the window, raised the shade. Over the neighboring roofs of Dunkirk the air was golden with the haze of the late afternoon. Pentecost Sandwith gazed a while, then his lips muttered the words: "*Let not the sun go down—*"

He took his beaver from the rack in the hall and the two, remaining where they were, still silent, knew he was on his reconciling way to Joshua Sandwith's home.

CHAPTER XII

A PLAIN MAN IN HIS PLAIN MEANING

While Pentecost Sandwith, intent upon a reconciliation with his brother after years of estrangement, was on his way to Burnham, Hecla sat in the parlors playing on the little rosewood spinet which had caused their quarrel. Hecla was not a musician, but she possessed a pretty uncultivated voice, which had often been praised by her Dunkirk admirers and especially by Wentworth, with whom formerly she had sung duets. Her father had indulged her in her taste for music despite the objection of his family, for he was not without an ear for simple melodies and liked to doze of an evening over his newspaper to such songs as *Flow Gently, Sweet Afton*, and *The Irish Emigrant's Lament*.

Since her return from Lititz Hecla had neglected her playing and singing, partly because Wentworth no longer came to the house; and to-day she had restlessly seated herself at the keyboard, less out of a desire for music than to occupy her mind. She had thought of her cousin until, as it seemed to the wretched girl, her heart and brain ached. Much of her usual self-control had fled; she felt herself a creature of shift and change and no more the saddened, resolute daughter of her father, who had vowed she would crush out this thought

of love at no matter what cost, since it was against her own and Wentworth's conscience. Reaction had come to her. She wished to see her cousin again, justifying the wish according to the mood. Sometimes she held she owed it to him to reason with him over his passion; sometimes that she owed it to herself to show him by another meeting that her affection was only that of kinship.

Her musings, which interwove themselves with her music, were at length interrupted by the sound of the front-door knocker and footsteps in the hall. When Richard Hallett entered the parlors Hecla was still at the spinet, agitated, thinking it was Wentworth, and not able quite to conceal her disappointment at the sight of the visitor.

"Don't stop," he entreated as she started to rise; "I have never heard you play." His face, colored with healthy ardor, proclaimed the pleasure he felt at discovering her to be alone.

Hecla had no desire to display her small talent as a musician; and she felt vexed that, seated where he faced her directly, he could study her at will. While she faltered without expression through a melody hastily selected at random, the Englishman continued to gaze at the picture she made. He thought what a graceful figure it was in the cool white muslin dress, which so contrasted with the rich hair glowing in the refreshing dusk of the parlors. On the delicate face bent over the thin ivory keys the mental suffering of the past days had left its mark, producing a new fine seriousness and giving it a more striking look of ideality.

"I have come to say good-by," he told her, when she

had finished playing. "To-morrow I go to live at Snow Shoe, where I shall begin prospecting in earnest. I have decided to remain in this country and invest what capital I have in coal mines here. The wisdom of this shall be proved in time. I am confident I shall restore local belief in Snow Shoe and its mineral wealth."

"I am sure you will succeed in whatever you undertake, Mr. Hallett," Hecla answered without looking at him. She had meant it as courtesy, but her voice betrayed how sincere was her belief in his capacity.

"Your confidence means a great deal to me," he returned. Then he added: "But I have not come to speak of my business ventures."

Hecla had already divined why he had come. Vanity she had in a measure, but after all it was superficial, easily merged in nobler moods. She dreaded the proposal she felt he was about to make, out of consideration for him as well as because she knew herself unequal, in her tired strained state of mind, to the effort it imposed upon her. Richard Hallett, she felt, was no faint-hearted suitor easily or lightly to be dismissed; not one to be diverted from his purpose by small feminine subterfuges. Nevertheless she said to him: "Perhaps you would like to walk in the garden, Mr. Hallett; I am quite proud of my roses this year." Hecla thought if there was not escape in this suggestion, it would at least be less painful to listen to his words in the larger privacy of the garden.

He made no move, however, and Hecla, who had left the spinet, after a moment of hesitation reseated herself at some distance from him.

Hallett quietly drew his chair near hers.

"The first time I saw you I felt I should want to make you my wife."

The abruptness of this speech disconcerted Hecla. She had no answer to make. He continued deliberately—with a deliberation that impressed her more than impassioned entreaty would have done:

"When I was young I had to devote myself to work. I have known few women and loved none until I met you. My life needs only one thing to make it complete, and that is you."

He was silent after this short speech; but his air was that of one ready to say more when occasion demanded. Richard Hallett was a man to whom words were unimportant in sacred moments of life. Hecla vaguely understood this and she was affected by it. She realized as he sat gravely awaiting her reply that the young Englishman, in asking her to marry him, paid her a tribute indeed; that the love he offered was founded on deep reverences and high ideals. Something within her rose to meet the requirement of the occasion. Her dominant feeling was a wish to preserve his flattering image of herself in the manner of her refusing.

"Any woman might value such an offer," she said sincerely, looking at him directly now for the first time, "and I should be unworthy of it if I did not. I am sorry, though, you have spoken, because there is only one answer I can make: I do not intend to marry."

She saw that Richard Hallett's face showed no sign of disappointment. He waited calmly for her to finish, and in the awkwardness of the silence she added nervously: "I have a duty toward my father."

"I was not wholly unprepared for your answer," he replied. "I do not wish to press you to think of me in this new light as yet. I shall wait."

"Time can make no difference; my answer will always be the same."

He smiled. "I have never failed in any aim. It is a great aim to make you my wife. Nothing shall turn me from that hope. You will learn to love me."

"I shall never feel differently toward you," she answered with a touch of pride. "I regret to pain you; but you are paining me."

She rose as she spoke.

"I realize," he said, as they faced each other, "that I use words you may resent. But I only express the conviction of my love."

"I do resent your words," she answered with growing spirit. "I can not permit you to speak as if I were a coquette or not sure of my own mind. I have told you, Mr. Hallett, I never intend to marry and I beg of you to believe that I mean it."

"But you are a woman and every woman should marry."

"I do not think so," she retorted quickly. "I have taken pleasure in your visits, but you must promise not to mention this subject to me again."

A sheet of music had slipped from the rack to the floor and she moved over and picked it up. Hallett stood gravely smiling, with an expression on his face which seemed to indicate tolerant patience of her woman's defiance. She saw this as she paused, one arm resting on the spinet. The pupils of her gray violet-ringed eyes had grown large in the curious fashion character-

izing her disturbed moods. His self-assurance angered her and her attitude was unconsciously that of defense. The power his presence exercised over her oppressed and alarmed her. Some instinct told her she had to combat something more subtle than his determination to win her. What Hecla drew from him by fateful accident was, perhaps, the instinct of blind selection that nothing would abate. She revolted against this unreasoning love of his—love the depths of which Richard Hallett probably had never stopped to gage in the absorption of his busy untempted life. It was Hecla's senses, active through fear, disturbed already by her feeling for her cousin, that guessed the truth—that the Englishman's slow-speeched declaration, the almost passionless dignity of his manner, belied him, and that he was only awakening to what passion really was, its unrest, hunger, relentlessness. Obstacles would only increase the zeal with which he would pursue her. While something of this came to Hecla as a confused subconscious impression, Hallett went over to her and took her unwilling hand.

"You must not ask me to promise what would seal my lips," he said. "Let it be friendship only on your side for the present. Believe me, I shall not urge you against your will. I promise that, since you ask it. But let me retain my hopes, despite your refusal; that can not injure you. I am young, and," he added as he pressed her hand in farewell, "youth is sanguine."

"It is unfortunate you feel so," she murmured.

He still retained her hand.

"There is one thing I should like to ask you."

She looked at him uneasily.

"Have you promised to marry any one else?"

"You have no right to ask me that," she said, drawing back from him.

"I have not the right, I admit," he answered in a quiet, altered voice, as he released her hand. "But you have answered me."

"No," she cried, "that is not true. I do *not* love any one!"

After he had left her she sat down at the spinet, burying her face in her hands and burning over the vehemence of her denial.

For some minutes Hecla sat there. She heard Hallett leave the house and his step on the gravel seemed to her to be as firm and confident as when he had entered the parlors. Reluctantly she admired the strength and determination of this man, and it was almost with terror she recognized the influence his character gained over her each time he saw her. She was accustomed to violent temperaments: her father's vehemence, the sullen rages of Dave, the passionate impetuosity of Wentworth on occasions; but the collected power and resolution of the Englishman was new to her and appealed to something akin in her own nature, rebel as she might against the domination.

Presently steps again sounded on the porch and Hecla, in fear that it was her lover returned, started to escape from the parlors. The front door opened as she reached the hall and she saw that it was Pentecost Sandwith. "Uncle Pentecost!" she exclaimed. Then with a feeling that something serious must have happened to bring him to Burnham: "Is Aunt Deborah ill?"

"No, child," was the old Quaker's answer; "thy aunt is well. Tell me where thy father is."

"On the side porch, I think."

He departed thither, and Hecla looked after him doubtfully. What did it mean, this visit, after he had refused for years to enter her father's house? Was he the bearer of ill tidings? She thought immediately of Dave with a sense of uneasiness. After all, she could not quite shake off the depression caused by Benjamin Truelove's prophecy. She followed him to the side porch, and it was with relief she saw the two old men seated quietly side by side. Pentecost's hand rested affectionately on her father's arm; and as she turned she heard the words:

"Joshua, let it not be said of us that *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*"

Joshua did not repulse the conciliating hand, but he answered in his quick lisping tones:

"The fault was thine, Pentecost. Was my door ever shut against thee? It was thee who refused to cross my threshold!"

"It is true, Joshua," the other answered humbly. "I have been like him who would take his gift to the altar not remembering his brother has aught against him."

"Often it had been well if thee had kept thy gift for Meeting," the iron-master retorted, for he was not yet mollified. "Thee was ever fond of having thy say, especially in the bringing up of other men's children. There's none wiser in such matters than he who has no offspring of his own."

"It may be the Lord denied me children, that I

might love thine the more," was the gentle reply. "I have always meant well by thy family. Brother," he continued, "I have been greatly concerned over what my wife Deborah told me of Benjamin and his message, and I have daily prayed since then that the chastening Hand may not fall too heavily on thy house." He made a discreet pause, then added: "How is it with thy stepson, David? I trust he does well at the Works."

"He has never asked my advice, so I put him no questions," the iron-master answered. "I have leased the furnace to him for a year, and it is his for that time to run as he likes. From little meddling cometh much ease, Pentecost! I grant thee, the boy has his faults, but I have taught him to speak truth and deal honestly with all men. As for the ill that Friend Truelove predicts will befall my roof, if it comes then come it must! Yet I have not deserved affliction of the Lord." He spoke with a quick petulance that masked emotion. "Well," he added as the other rose, "I am glad thee came, Pentecost. I have no wish to die at odds with thee."

After his brother's departure he stood gazing on the broad fertile acres of Burnham. The sun was dropping behind the blue wall of distant mountains and its rays flooded the grounds with a ruddy glory. Joshua was proud of his home, with its stately walnuts, its flowers and velvet turf, its walks and arbors, and the spreading green meadow where wound the brook on its leisurely way to Dunkirk. The scene was a witness of comfort and affluence acquired through an industrious life, and his eyes rested on it with affection. Were his children not to enjoy the fruits of his labor?

The sun disappeared; a mist rose from the stream and

spread its fleece over the garden; the chill seemed to reach his breast.

"What makes thee sigh, father?" Hecla questioned, stealing to his side. "Isn't thee glad Uncle Pentecost has made peace with thee at last?"

"Hecla," he said abruptly, "has Richard Hallett asked thee to be his wife?"

"Yes, father, he spoke to-day and I told him I would never leave thee."

"I am an old man and soon must leave thee, daughter. I should like to see thee wed to Richard Hallett. He will protect thee against misfortune when I am gone. Why did thee refuse him?"

"Because I don't love him, father." Then putting her arm around his neck: "Thee's still thinking of Benjamin Truelove's words, I know thee is! No misfortune is coming, unless thee invites it by thy fears. I know thee is troubled about Dave. But what has Dave done to make thee worry so? I suspect Uncle Pentecost has been speaking of him. They all treat him as if he were a criminal, and it isn't fair. Surely thee hasn't lost faith in Dave without his doing anything to deserve it!"

"My concern's for thee, daughter. Dave is a man and can meet whatever troubles befall him. Why didn't thee accept Richard Hallett? I have great confidence in him."

"I've told thee, father; because I don't love him."

Mr. Sandwith sighed again.

"I trust thee hasn't encouraged him then or permitted liberties; and remember, never give thy promise unless thee means to keep it. That is the honor of the Sand-

withs. Well, if thee does not love Richard Hallett thee did well to refuse him. Thee knows what William Penn says: *Never marry but for love and see that thou lovest what is lovely.* Come, let us go indoors. It grows chill."

CHAPTER XIII

HOT BLOOD AND A COLD DECREE

It was a late July afternoon at the Forge store. Custom had slackened and the tired clerks were wiping perspiring red faces behind a triangular counter piled with pound and half-pound packages ready for buyers. From time to time charges were called out to Bayletts, the book-keeper, whose quill scratched his journal at the standing-desk near a rear window, through which came the droning sounds of the rolling-mill. The journal, like Bayletts, had its peculiarities. On the margin of the pages the writer recorded in his fine crabbed hand the state of the weather and of his feelings, the drunkenness and bad language of workmen, interspersing with these and other items scraps of verse from Collins and Gray.

The usual group of pay-day loafers sat around the empty goblet-shaped stove, on which they expectorated at intervals. Above the general noises could be heard the brassy buzz of blue flies.

The object of their attention was a terrier which Dave Sandwith had got from a dog fancier in Dunkirk to exterminate the rats in the store cellar. The sum paid for the animal caused old Solomon Stitch to shake his head.

"The price of a dawg an' the wages of a dotter a sin is an abomination in the sight a the Lord," he asserted. "The young man 'll bring his pap's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave."

"Ol' Trouble hain't got no gray hairs, but mebbe Dave 'll whiten one of them scratches a hizn," Archy McSwords answered ironically, surreptitiously thrusting his hand into the "grab barrel" of rank half-Spanish cigars. "The pup 'll pay fer hissself in bacon saved."

"Thez more wastage goen' on then bacon, Ah jedge," said Mog Pickle. "Ye mind wot Ah said ez how they'd be wuss trouble than Ol' Trouble ere all's said an' did."

Old Ely, an ex-collier, rubbed his nose with huge knuckles. "How about them kimical ovens Ah heerd the boss was a-goen' to build?" he asked huskily.

"He up an' built 'em," Solomon gloomily affirmed; "he up an' built 'em."

"An' how's the coal?"

"'Tain't no good like the ol' fuel, Ah holds," the keeper returned.

"Ah knowed it, Ah knowed it," Old Ely cried triumphantly. "They ain't no way a-maken' coal like the ol' way." His face and voice expressed the protest of a dying industry. The slow blue smoke of the charcoal hearth seemed to drift across his rheumy vision; he heard again the rustle of lonely leaves in the mountain haunts where the long-drawn cry of catamounts came to him in his night watches. "They ain't no ways good as the ol' way. Hain't I set many a night outen the Ridges with nothen' around but me an' the Lord, wot growed the leetle saplen' just to burn? Hain't I ben a master-collier all me days an' don't I know? Ah heerd a folks,

'y God, ez claimed to be master-colliers in a couple a weeks but Ah never seed 'em make much coal. An' why? 'Cause they left it burn up! I had pits in the woods wher they wuzn't nawthen' but clay an' sand fer yer dust and folks 'lowed Ah cud git more coal to a cord a wood then any man wot ever put fire in a pit." He turned to Solomon Stitch. "You mind w'en ye made the biggest burden ever Heely made, and that, 'y God, wuz five pounds more ner a half-ton."

"It can't be did," Archy McSwords scoffed. "Ye're drunk, dad."

"Ah ain't tellen' ye no lies," replied the old man indignantly. "Ah don't owe you nawthen' and you don't owe me nawthen'. Am Ah right, Solomon, er am Ah wrong?"

"It's so," and Solomon Stitch nodded his head several times in somber affirmation.

"Ah 'low no kiln coalen' 'll beat that!" finished the ex-collier elatedly.

It was evident that neither Dave nor his new methods of conducting the Works had won the approbation of the older workmen. This was not so much personal dislike of Dave as their prejudice against innovations of any kind at the furnace. The feeling was expressed in the forebodings of Solomon and Mog. As for Archy McSwords, his objection to the young iron-master was principally sentimental. His quarrel the night of the blowing-out had left him jealous and suspicious of Dave and his attentions to his sweetheart, Alpharetta Brown.

At this moment the young woman and her mother Peggy entered the store, and conversation among the loafers around the stove ceased as Peggy's voice was

heard in lively altercation with one of the clerks. The founder's wife had been refused credit in the purchase of some calico. The clerk finally referred the matter to Bayletts.

"Can't have it," he snapped; "got all you needed last week."

"Ah didn't neither," Peggy cried indignantly.

"It's charged to ye," Bayletts answered, unconcernedly turning over a page of the day-book, on the margin of which he had reported the unflattering remarks passed on Dave by Solomon and the others.

"The ol' man was drunk last week," some one remarked. It was well known that the book-keeper, when he indulged in his occasional sprees, put down to the workmen's accounts what he guessed to be the amount of their purchases during his absence.

"The boss ott ta give Alpharetta all the print she wants," piped Uncle Billy with a wink at Mog Pickle. He was glad of a chance to irritate the young teamster, who was always taunting him on his age. Archy was, however, gazing fondly at Alpharetta and did not hear.

"Ah dunno about thet," Joe the jigger-boss commenced. "Dave is mighty sweet on Sis Littlepage these days. 'Tis said they'll like ez not hitch. She's got a heap-sight a school l'arnen'."

"The young man's too fond a girlen'. It's now one an' now t'other," Mog reflected. "Wall, ez Jerry Brown says, young blood hez to burn."

Here Peggy gave a joyful exclamation at the sight of Christy Pickle, who came striding into the store. Having listened to the other's complaint she fixed a stern eye on the book-keeper. "You give Peggy wot she

wants," she ordered in her high tones. "W'en a woman hez girls she's got to clothe 'em proper."

"No business having so many," Bayletts crustily returned.

"Ah hain't hed no more 'n ma number," the prolific mother in Israel cried at this reflection. There was a standard of child-bearing to be lived up to at The Bank.

"Where's the boss?" Christy demanded fiercely. "He'll do wot *I* tells him. Where's the boss, Ah say? I got to talk to him about doen' some shinglen' on the Row. It's all racked up with leaks an' Ah ain't goen' to have no summer complaints on me hands."

"He's at the mill," the clerk informed her, "but Mr. Sandwith's in the office writing, if you want to see him."

At that Christy vigorously thrust open the door into a passageway and disappeared.

When, a little later, Bayletts followed her, he found the iron-master apparently taking a doze, his wig pulled down over his eyes. The office with its small barred windows was dark and dingy-looking. A curious old-time safe with a huge key rested on the floor; there was a county map on the wall, some rare specimens of ore on the mantel-piece, and in one corner of the room stood a twelve-day clock with its works removed, because it had once struck thirteen times. Bayletts looked meditatively at Mr. Sandwith, then he went noiselessly to the clock, opened the case door and drew out a bottle ornamented with a picture of General Jackson. He measured a drink with his thumb, swallowed it at a gulp and returned General Jackson to his ambush. Bayletts concealed his bottle in odd places like a cautious jackdaw, and further to insure it from disturb-

ance flavored the liquor with asafetida. He stood still a moment and then coughed.

His old master pushed back his wig from his eyes.

"Well, Bayletts, how's thee been sleeping?"

"Haven't slept. Can't sleep for the cows," the laconic answer was. Bayletts was afflicted with insomnia and night sounds annoyed him. The tinkling of cow-bells caused him frequently to jump out of bed at Mrs. Littlepage's and pursue the cows across the hills with frightful profanity. Bayletts chewed hard on the wooden peg he kept usually between his teeth as a substitute for tobacco. A glance told Mr. Sandwith the book-keeper's mind was troubled.

"Well, Bayletts?"

As he spoke he closed his eyes, a habit he had when listening. Mr. Sandwith had been uneasy over Dave and the Works ever since his talk with his brother Pentecost. He had said then that he would ask no question of his stepson regarding his business; but his misgivings had led him that afternoon to pay a visit to the office, where he expected to find Dave. Seated there in his old accustomed seat he had dozed a while until awakened by the book-keeper's entrance. He knew Bayletts to be trustworthy in spite of his occasional sprees and devoted to his interests. If Bayletts had anything important to communicate, Joshua Sandwith did not consider it against his conscience to listen to him.

"Dave gives too much credit."

"That's my son's affair," Joshua returned impatiently. He had been indulgent with the men in their accounts at the store and he had no fault to find with Dave for following his example.

"Iron's been running cold short."

Joshua waited with a sudden compression of the eyelids.

"Louisville shipment rejected."

"What does thee say, Bayletts?"

The iron-master's eyes opened quickly and gripping the arms of his chair he looked incredulous wrath.

Bayletts solemnly nodded in affirmation of his word.

"Thee lies, Bayletts!"

"Very well, sir."

"I tell thee, thee lies," Joshua exclaimed furiously. "My son said the Louisville buyers were greatly pleased with the pig and ordered another shipment."

"Then Dave lies."

"Thee dares say my son has told me a falsehood!"

His master had started from his chair when a faintness seized him and he sank back suddenly in his seat; his bilious skin changed to a sickly pallor. Bayletts, stooping, picked up the iron-master's beaver that had fallen from his knee to the floor. Then he stood waiting in considerate silence.

Joshua's lips moved futilely for a moment. Then he asked:

"Where is Dave?"

"At the mill."

"Tell him I wish to see him."

Bayletts reluctantly left the room.

Presently Dave appeared. On his head his Kossuth hat sat jauntily; he wore a flowered silk waistcoat, from a pocket of which dangled a heavy watch-chain; his trousers were pushed into glossy riding-boots.

"What is it, father?" he carelessly asked, seating

himself on the table and tapping his leg with his whip.

"My son"—the iron-master endeavored to control himself—"show me the Louisville letter."

Dave's face expressed embarrassed surprise at the demand, but he answered readily:

"Why, father, I told thee what was in the letter."

"Show it to me; I desire to see it!"

"I don't know where it is," was the sulky reply.

Mr. Sandwith faced his son; his mouth trembled and his nose was pinched with passion. "Thee has lied to me. The Louisville order was rejected!"

Confronted thus, Dave took refuge in bravado. "Who told thee that? So thee comes out here and spies into my affairs!"

With a furious exclamation the old iron-master snatched the whip from his stepson's hand and raised it as if to strike. Then, restraining himself, he snapped it in twain and threw the pieces from him. "Go," he commanded in a terrible voice, "before I chastise thee as thee deserves. Thee has disgraced the honest name thee bears! Go, that I may not curse the day I took thee into my house and called thee son!"

Dave flung himself out of the office, and Mr. Sandwith sat down in his chair, weak from his access of rage. The revelation of Dave's business incapacity only confirmed his own misgivings. The rejection of the important Louisville order was due to carelessness. Never in his own day had his famous "Juniata Iron" been refused, because it was always tested before shipping. But it was not the discovery of Dave's negligence that shocked his stepfather; it was the fact that Dave had told him a deliberate falsehood. It was this that

angered him, that was unforgivable. The absolute honesty and scrupulous love of truth that formed the essence of Joshua Sandwith's character could make no allowance for Dave's pride, which had inspired the lie. Dave was a liar, and at a blow Mr. Sandwith's faith in him was destroyed.

As he meditated there in the silent office the old man tasted the bitterness of defeated life-hopes. He thought of his weakling child Jervis, only male heir of his flesh. He had yearned for a son to whom he might look to hand on his unstained reputation as an iron-master, and for that reason he had adopted Dave, tried to teach him his ideas of duty and conduct, trained him in business and finally allowed him to step into his own place as master of the Works. Dave had failed him; had shown himself unworthy of his confidence. On whom now could he lean?

He thought a long time, his chin supported on his bent thumbs, his eyes fixed on the broken whip lying on the floor where he had thrown it.

He was oppressed by the prophecy of Benjamin True-love. What ill fortunes were in store for his two children? Hecla—must he leave her to face trouble without a protector? He sighed as he thought of Richard Hallett. Why had she not accepted this eligible suitor? Yet he would not compel his daughter to wed against her will.

Taking a sheet of paper Joshua Sandwith began writing in his curious exact fashion.

Christy Pickle, after her talk with Joshua Sandwith on the subject of leaks and shingling at The Bank, took

her way up the turnpike. As she tramped along in Mog's stiff Sunday boots she passed a string of ore-wagons returning from the mines—great clumsy conveyances drawn by gaunt mules caked with clay and their rumps worn by breech-straps. Seated on the saddle mule or trudging beside their teams were the drivers in smock and felt hat, jerking the long single rein, their "Gee-haws!" sounding above rattling wheel and cheery chime of bells. The teamsters gave the old woman respectful greeting. Not one there was but owed Christy Pickle gratitude for some act of kindness. Christy was now on one of her myriad missions of forceful kindness. Eager benevolence increased the swiftness of her strides and gave a severe expression to the angular face, with its intricate wrinkles and skin like that of a plucked pullet.

She had not proceeded far when her black eyes beheld Miss Clover Littlepage coming home from school. To the old woman the girl owed much of her success as teacher of refractory urchins. Christy often visited the school-room, and at the least disturbance would shake her stick at the children. This interest proved at times a mixed blessing. One day, being informed the pretty school-mistress was teaching her scholars that the earth was round, the autocrat of the Works marched into the school-room and bore off the globe with which Miss Clover demonstrated the fact, declaring she saw the sun rise and set with her own eyes. Later this same globe, divided in halves, might have been seen adorning the heads of two orphans, afterward known as Eastern and Western Hem.

Miss Littlepage greeted Christy with a smile that

animated her face. Tips of hidden pearl gleamed behind the clinging red lips and a little strawberry mole on her cheek danced gaily for a moment. Christy's look as she paused apparently frightened the mole into sobriety.

"Say, hez Dave spoke to ye yit about morryen' him?" she demanded.

The school-mistress blushed. "No, he hasn't," she faltered truthfully, "but, please, what right have you to ask me such a question as that?"

"An' he don't never intend to," was the reply in a voice that kindness only made rougher. "You ain't the only one he fools. Dave is keen on the gals, be they fast or loose. Ah speaks fer yer own good, Sis," she went on with well-meaning harshness, "wen Ah warns ye not to be took in by his soft sodder. It's the way a man hez. Now, if you got sense ye'll up and hitch with one of them clerks at the store ez'll only be too proud to git ye."

"Thank you for your kind advice," Miss Littlepage said haughtily, and with her head held high she continued on her way.

Christy Pickle, her hands planted on her hips, sighed as she looked after her. The virtue of her sex lay heavy on her old heart. She thought of her own girlhood and its temptations.

"Well, Ah done me dooty," she muttered.

As the little school-mistress walked indignantly down the road, the object of old Christy's cautions came in sight. Dave was on his chestnut mare, Pedigree, and his face wore the sullen, angry look with which he had left his stepfather. He considered himself to have

been outrageously treated by his father in the conversation that had just taken place between them. The world was down on him, he reflected as he rode along. Hecla had won Mr. Sandwith's promise not to tell her brother of Benjamin Truelove's prediction and she had a solemn pledge from Hetty also. But Hetty, meeting Dave a few days later, was overcome by the temptation to make him uncomfortable. "What was the use of having the tea-party spoiled for nothing?" she retorted at Hecla's reproaches. "I'm glad I told him; it will do him good." Dave had heard of the "message" with indignation, remarking that it was not the Spirit but his aunts and uncles who had moved the young preacher to prophesy; they were always filling people's ears with malicious tales about him. He had used the information Hetty had provided him to his own advantage in his talks with Hecla.

"Well, if everybody believes I am going to ruin the family, what's the use of disappointing people? There's father, he has no faith in me now!"

"That is not true, Dave," Hecla had answered. "And I believe in you—I shall always believe in you!" It was partly pride, partly fear of the effect of the news on his father that had caused Dave to conceal from him the fact of the rejected Louisville order. Mr. Sandwith's anger on discovering he had been lied to gave Dave uneasiness; but he trusted to Hecla's affection for him and her influence over her father to make peace between them. She had shielded him from Mr. Sandwith's anger on so many previous occasions she would doubtless be able to smooth over the present difficulty.

On seeing Clover the young man drew rein.

"Hello," he called out at the sight of her flushed, unhappy face, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing," she said with a quivering lip. "Don't stop me, please." And she started to pass by him.

"Wait," Dave remonstrated, jumping off his horse, "I want to talk to you."

"I don't want to talk to you," she said, struggling with her tears. "I never want to speak to you or see you again!"

"You know you don't mean that," he smiled.

"I do mean it!" she faltered. "What right have you to stop me this way?"

"Why, lots of right," he answered coolly. "Come, I want to know who's been hurting your feelings."

Slipping his arm through his horse's bridle Dave drew the reluctant girl down a lane that ran from the pike between pine-grown hills. When a turn hid them from sight of the main road Dave fastened Pedigree to a sapling, and Clover and he sat down on a fern-tufted log.

"Now tell me about it," he said, slipping his arm around her slim young waist.

"Don't," she protested. "Christy Pickle says—"

"What does Christy Pickle say?"

Sudden tears were her answer.

He drew the woeful face to him until it rested against his shoulder. "You are pretty fond of me after all, aren't you, little girl?" he asked in a thick voice. "Say you're fond of me." And his lips met hers.

"You know, you know," she sobbed.

"Then why did you act as you did when I stopped you?"

"Because Christy Pickle told me—told me you didn't mean—"

"Go on," he coaxed her.

"That you treat everybody this way."

"It's one of Christy Pickle's lies. I don't love anybody but you, Clover."

"But—"

"But what?"

"Christy Pickle says—"

"The old oracle! It makes such a difference what she says!"

"She said you never intended marrying me," Clover persisted, "and that I ought to 'hitch' with one of the clerks at the store!" Indignation dried the tears in her blue eyes. "It's not kind of you to laugh!" she flashed at his droll look.

"Which clerk did she suggest? Was it Sam Taylor? He has weak eyes but he's a nice fellow. Or was it 'Dutchy'?"

She drew away from him in offense.

"Clover, I'm only teasing you!"

"No, I won't be kissed," she cried, struggling with him. "It's true what Christy Pickle said and you don't respect or care for me. I'm not good enough for you, I suppose! Don't I know how proud your family is?"

He drew her close to him.

"Kiss me, little girl, and say you'll marry me."

"No, no," she breathed, "let me go."

"Not until you give me a kiss!"

"Dave," she sighed, "Dave—"

The grave old mountain pines spread their mantling branches over them. The heat of the summer sun drew

fragrance from the golden moss. A thrush sang its happy song, and the bees in the wayside flowers boomed drowsily. Clover lay against his breast in the sweet musing solitude of the enfolding hills. She was only a child and she loved him. And to love is to trust—to have no fears.

CHAPTER XIV

A YOUTH THAT MEANS TO BE OF NOTE

Wentworth was seated at his desk one morning toiling over a complicated land-suit. The office fronted the Diamond—the only level space in the hilly town—and through the window he could see the white-pillared court-house with its maple-shaded green where sheep were grazing. Beyond neighboring roofs rose the hazy heather-blue mountains that divided the rolling valley from its neighbor. It was August, and seventeen-year locusts vibrated the heated air with their ancient burden of “Pharaoh.” Dunkirk sages called these visitors warnings from the Almighty that the country would be chastened for its political crimes.

Politics was the all-absorbing topic of conversation that exciting summer of fifty-seven. Dunkirk had been holding indignation meetings over the Sumner-Brooks episode. The *Tribune* was eagerly scanned by pious Republicans for latest exaggerations of Border Ruffianism. Local patriotism had expressed itself worthily in subscriptions to the Kansas fund. James Buchanan had been nominated by the Democratic party and “Free Trade, Free Men and Fremont” was already a familiar phrase.

Wentworth, glancing up from his papers, saw the

sturdy short figure of Joshua Sandwith passing along the street. He surmised that his uncle was coming to discuss with him the political situation of the town. The night before there had been a meeting of the Democratic party for the nomination of county officers.

No one took greater interest in the affairs of the nation than Joshua Sandwith. It was his habit daily to walk to the post-office to secure at first hand, for fear of mishap, his *Tribune* and his *North American*, the two solid pillars of his political faith. These he read with zeal from beginning to end, then placed them under the cushion of the arm-chair on which he always sat to guard them from disturbance. The loss of his *Tribune* before he had scanned for the second time what Horace Greeley had to say on free trade, the Papal menace, Irish immigration and like national ills, frequently upset the household. The iron-master had on several occasions figured prominently in presidential campaigns, much to the scandal of his brothers Pentecost and Gideon. His "pocket-knife argument" in favor of high tariff was as well known as his demonstration of the good effects of his galvanic battery, which began, "Thee knows all hangs on the spine—." During the Henry Clay campaign Joshua Sandwith canvassed the inhabitants of the next valley, popularly referred to as "the dumb Dutch," and tried to harangue them to his own political views, with the result that the simple Germans were convinced the old Quaker was himself aspiring to fill the presidential chair.

"Wentworth, thee must be a leader, not a follower of men," lisped the old iron-master, as he settled himself in a chair opposite his nephew, his small, strong hands

clasped on the head of his black walnut cane and his angular mouth contentedly working his quid. It was significant of an unusual state of mind that his letters were in his hat, where he had put them after getting them from the post-office, and that his newspapers still reposed unread in the tail of his plain gray coat. He continued: "I have proposed thy name for county treasurer, nephew. The Democrats are determined to win in the coming fight by fair means or foul, and we must take off our coats. Thee'll have a hard tussle and must take the stump and show thy spirit."

Wentworth's face denoted none of the enthusiasm Mr. Sandwith anticipated and he looked at him sharply.

"What ails thee," he asked; "isn't thee feeling well?"

"I'm quite well, uncle."

Mr. Sandwith irritably screwed his wig back into place.

"Then what's come over thee of late?" he demanded. "I had hopes of seeing thee a great lawyer, but thee no longer has the air of a man in love with his career. To-day I tell thee there's a chance of thee winning the first political office in the county and thee receives the news as though thee had no ambition to be a credit to the community."

"I'm sorry I disappoint you, Uncle Joshua."

"Wentworth, does thee think me a fool or blind?" was the impatient retort. "I have suspected for some time there is trouble between thee and Hecla. Dare thee deny it? She has been moping ever since she came home from school. Thee and she have always been too fond of each other for the good of either. If my daughter harbors wrong feelings for thee—"

"Uncle, you do Hecla the greatest injustice," broke in Wentworth, flushing. "She has never had the slightest feeling for me except as a cousin. There is trouble between us, I admit; but it is my fault. I am responsible for her unhappiness. I have grown to love her, uncle. You will think it unworthy of me, I know, to have let Hecla find it out. It is a poor return for all your help and kindness to me."

The other looked at his averted face. "Well," he commented dryly, "thee's an honest lad, Wentworth, and doesn't lie to me. I have had an inkling of this thing and I don't blame thee as much as thee supposes. Hecla is also at fault, I have reason to believe, in spite of what thee says. But it's thy part as a man to wrestle with thy heart and overcome this folly." He laid his hand gently on his nephew's knee. "Wentworth, thee is young. I have not forgotten what youth is and its temptations. But I have faith in thee and thy manhood. Thee must promise me thee'll take up the duties of life and prove thyself the sensible lad I know thee to be. Learn to conquer. Show thy spirit in the great fight before us! Win the battle against the beast, Democracy, and it will teach thee to win the battle against thy wrong passion. I love thee like a son, Wentworth. Would to God thee were my son!"

He sat for a moment silent, an expression of sadness on his sharp fallow face. Then with his usual imperative manner, he said, striking his cane smartly on the floor: "Boy, thee must be the next county treasurer!"

After he had gone Wentworth sat thinking over Joshua Sandwith's words. A certain relief followed on the confession he had made. His conscience had

troubled him because he supposed his uncle did not suspect his feelings for Hecla. He was glad the subject had been brought up and that he now stood in an honest light in his benefactor's eyes. He had not expected this gentleness; and the allowance shown him touched Wentworth keenly. He recognized the truth of his uncle's rebuke. Thoughts of Hecla had been permitted to sap his energy for work. There was no doubt that he had fallen into a spirit of lethargy, had grown indifferent to ambition's call. He asked himself what had become of his manhood that he should have so yielded to hopeless repining. His uncle had exacted a promise that he would accept the nomination if it were offered him, and that he would throw himself into the coming campaign; and he was resolved to keep his word.

He had not been to see Hecla, as she wished; he had been able to put so much restraint on his love. This self-denial had, however, cost him dear. Emotions vested the image of Hecla in his heart with a hundred soft appeals, and he constantly speculated over Richard Hallett's admiration for Hecla. That the Englishman had paid her significant attentions he was aware from seeing them constantly together during their stay at Moshannon Hall, and from town gossip, which not only coupled their names but predicted a speedy marriage. He confessed to himself that he could not yet reconcile himself to the thought of Hecla's being the wife of any other man; and it was with satisfaction of which he felt somewhat ashamed that he had learned from the Englishman how much of the time his business interests would keep him at Snow Shoe.

It was some days after his uncle's visit to his office

that Wentworth met Richard Hallett on the Diamond. As they shook hands Wentworth asked the other how he was getting along in his work.

Hallett and Mr. Trevis Markham of Moshannon Hall had gone into partnership in a coal-mining enterprise. A promising vein had been struck not far from Snow Shoe, and Hallett hoped soon to have the mine in operation.

"Why, very well," the Englishman replied. "There have been some unfortunate delays, but by next month we expect to have the miners at work. I have the fullest confidence in the success of our undertaking. Of course we have had to begin on a small scale for want of capital. Lack of capital is our chief trouble."

"Why haven't you got my uncle, Mr. Sandwith, interested in your schemes? He has always had such faith in Snow Shoe."

"I have not asked Mr. Sandwith to put money in the mine," Hallett answered quietly. "I am expecting some capital from English friends to whom I have written about our enterprises."

"You know, Hallett," Wentworth said earnestly, "I am ready to do anything in my power to persuade our prudent Dunkirk citizens what a good investment Snow Shoe is, now you have taken matters in hand out there. Unfortunately, the failure of the old company has made them cautious."

"Yes, and they are cautious about me. It seems I have the reputation in Dunkirk of being a free-thinker. How that can affect my capacity to run a coal mine, I confess I am unable to see. But, believe, I'm not discouraged over that," he ended with a laugh.

Here their talk was interrupted by the tripping approach of Mrs. Tathem accompanied by her daughter, Pinkie. Mrs. Tathem greeted her old boarder with nods and becks and wreathed smiles.

"Why, Mr. Hallett!" she cried archly, "what a stranger you are these days!"

"Yes, Mrs. Tathem, I seldom get time to come to Dunkirk," said Hallett.

"Now, don't give the coal mine as an excuse, Mr. Hallett," the lady chid, playfully threatening him with a forefinger on which was a mourning ring in memory of her lamented spouse. "You mayn't find time to come and see us town-folks. Burnham's far too attractive, I fear! When are we to congratulate you and Miss Hecla?"

"Ma, dear," her daughter expostulated, "don't talk that way! You're hurting Mr. Oliver's feelings!"

"That's true, so I am! I beg your pardon, Mr. Oliver; I ought to have remembered how sweet you and your cousin used to be before Mr. Hallett entered the field. And to think of you two gentlemen being such friends! Well, I call it just too nice of you, Mr. Oliver, not to be challenging your rival to a duel. Coffee and pistols for two, as they say!" And Mrs. Tathem jingled her earrings in ecstasies of pleantry. "But we mustn't interrupt your conversation. Good-by! And, Mr. Hallett, do come and see us when you can spare the time—from your coal mine!" And the lady tripped away with Miss Pinkie in her wake.

"Perhaps it would be pleasanter to continue our talk at the office," Wentworth said somewhat awkwardly.

"Yes," the Englishman assented. "I was on my way

there. I wanted to speak to you about the purchase of the mining outfit of the old Snow Shoe company."

They said nothing more until they had reached Oliver's office. Hallett drew out a bundle of papers from his pocket, but instead of passing them over to the lawyer he held them in his hand while he asked with characteristic directness:

"Is it true what Mrs. Tathem said?"

"You mean her reference to Hecla Sandwith and myself?"

"Yes," Hallett answered, "if you don't mind telling me."

"It depends on why you ask," Wentworth returned rather stiffly.

"The reason I ask is that I love Miss Sandwith and have told her so," was the reply.

"You're engaged to my cousin?"

"No, but I am confident that I shall win her."

"If my cousin has refused you I don't believe she will ever change her mind," Wentworth answered.

"And yet I hope she will do so," Hallett said quietly. "Mr. Sandwith approves of my suit."

"You mean that you'd marry her whether she loved you or not?" Wentworth demanded.

"Yes; unless, Mr. Oliver, you've a claim I should feel bound to respect." And he added: "Miss Sandwith would learn to love me."

"You need not consider me," Wentworth said. "Our relationship makes marriage between us impossible. We are first cousins, you know."

"First cousins frequently marry in England. Is there a law forbidding it in Pennsylvania?"

"No, there's no law; but the prejudice of Quakers is very strong on that point. It would be considered by them next to criminal."

"So that is why you hesitate!"

"I owe too much to my uncle not to regard his feelings. No, Mr. Hallett, I'm no obstacle in your path."

"Then I shall win your cousin," Hallett said after a slight pause. "Miss Sandwith is young and can not be certain of her mind."

"If you think that," the other said quickly, "you don't appreciate her character. She doesn't wish to marry. Her father's commands, however, would very strongly influence her mind. Considering her sentiments about marriage I think she is right in remaining single."

"You think she ought not to marry?" Hallett said with a half-smile that Wentworth considered intolerable.

"I think she ought only to marry a man that she loves passionately—with her whole heart. Otherwise the marriage will result in unhappiness."

"And you think that Miss Sandwith loves you that way—passionately and with her whole heart?"

"No, I don't think that she loves me that way," Wentworth returned, flushing. "I have no proof that she loves me at all. I am not opposing her marriage to another because of my own feelings for her. It is because I understand her, because I know that only a very deep love for the man she weds will overcome certain views she has regarding marriage."

"Surely Miss Sandwith has not what in England are called 'advanced views' regarding matrimony?"

"No, I mean—you have perhaps heard how her mother died?"

"Mrs. Sandwith, I have been told, died of premature child-birth caused by a lightning shock while out driving."

"Yes, and Hecla was with her at the time of the accident. It made a terrible impression."

"One can easily understand that it would do so. But you do not, perhaps, appreciate how such morbid fears would vanish where a woman loves."

"I very well understand that. That is why I said my cousin ought only to marry a man she loves passionately. Otherwise—"

"There will be no otherwise as far as Miss Sandwith is concerned," Hallett interrupted. "I shall succeed in winning her heart."

"You are over-confident, Mr. Hallett."

"Not over-confident," was the answer. "I possess only what every man should have to succeed in life." He regarded Wentworth for a moment gravely. "You are frank with me, are you not, when you say that you yield your claims to Miss Sandwith's hand?"

"Yes," Wentworth answered, "honor demands that I give her up."

"Then I shall win her for my wife."

"Yes, he'll win her for his wife," Wentworth said bitterly to himself after the Englishman had gone. "But what about her love?"

Hecla's tragic face rose before his mind.

"She was born to be unhappy," the thought came to him, "and this Englishman will be the cause of her worst unhappiness."

CHAPTER XV.

STREETS OF ASKALON

Miss Pinkie Tathem was seated on her mother's Dutch door-sill reading *The Children of the Abbey*. The hard rays of the August sun beat down on the little iron porch as if with praiseworthy attempt to ripen its clusters of perpetually green grapes. The only outdoor sounds were the locusts, noisy as watchman's rattles, in the maples in front of the house. From time to time she lifted her eyes from the absorbing volume to glance up and down the street. Miss Pinkie was a diligent student of Dunkirk street life. When not seated on the door-sill she was usually to be seen at the front parlor window, where it was said she often carried her plate at meal hours.

Her aunt, feeding the goldfish in the hall, gave a nervous start which caused her to drop her bread-crumbs in a sudden bounty.

"What was it you said, Pinkie?" she murmured in her agitated tones as she came to the doorway. "I thought I heard you say—" Pinkie's Aunt 'Dosh had never recovered from the shock to her sensibilities when the late Mr. Tathem jilted her for her sister 'Stash. That was years ago, but Dunkirk remembered with what effect she had used her scissors on Eustacia's

bridal gown, vowing as she did so, that she would never speak to her sister again; and Eudocia kept her vow.

"I said, 'I am betrayed'," was her niece's impatient answer. "It's Amanda's language 'when a confused idea darted into her mind that a deep-laid plot had been concerted to ruin her.'"

"Oh, you were saying things out of a book! You startled me so. I thought some one had been trifling with your feelings. 'Men are deceitful ever,' as one of the great poets says; I thought Mr. Hallett had—though he seems a nice honorable gentleman."

"I had to *avoid* Mr. Hallett, Aunt 'Dosh," Pinkie replied.

"How painful it is, Pinkie, the way you have to avoid people! There is Mr. Blair Nandine, you are avoiding him. I hear Miss Hetty Waln isn't. But you're not avoiding Mr. Donovan, are you, dear? I remember you walked home from church with him last Sunday."

Pinkie admitted the fact with a slight sigh. She feared the young rector suspected she left her prayer-book in her pew intentionally, he had been so coldly polite in assisting her to find it. "I'm afraid I shall soon have to begin, Aunt 'Dosh," she declared.

"Well, Pinkie, I'm sure you are right. One can't be too careful about falling in love; it's so apt to be with the wrong person and then—it breaks one's heart." After a little nervous pause she added: "Pinkie, dear, I wish you'd tell your mother Katey's cut off the tenderloin again and given it to the cats. She said it was the full moon and that made her do it, but I think it can't be full moon again since she did it last time. Did you happen to notice the other evening when you were on

the steps with Mr. Karl? It is very strange of Katey to act so! I think she must have been trifled with when she was young. Well, Pinkie, you'd better tell your mother about Katey and the cat."

"If the cat's eaten the tenderloin what is the use of telling ma?" her niece said with petulant practicality. "I am so tired of repeating things for you, Aunt 'Dosh. I really think you ought to speak to ma yourself after twenty years!"

"You know I can't speak to sister 'Stash, Pinkie. I try, I'm sure—I try, and I can't utter a sound. My heart has almost forgiven her, I think; but my voice hasn't. I wonder what I'll do when I die. I shouldn't like to die without telling sister 'Stash I have nothing against her."

"Mr. Donovan would call it very un-Christian of you, I know that. I often wonder why Mr. Hallett never asked what the matter was between you and ma. I know I'd have asked."

"Everybody hasn't your innocent curiosity, dear. Perhaps Mr. Hallett didn't care what was the trouble. But I can't talk about it, Pinkie, it makes me feel so strange,"—and Miss Eudocia, patting her tears with her handkerchief, faded from the doorway noiselessly as a ghost.

Pinkie had ceased to pay attention to her aunt, for she had caught sight of Joshua Sandwith with a box under his arm coming up the street. She surmised the box to be the iron-master's notorious galvanic battery. And when Mr. Sandwith entered the house of a former iron-master who lived opposite Mrs. Tathem's, she wondered if he were going to use it on the invalid.

Presently there were steps descending the hall stairs. Pinkie knew whose. She quickly gave each cheek a little pinch to bring out the color, tidied her blond curls and smoothed her white muslin skirts. "And where are *you* bound, Mr. Donovan?" she asked sweetly, as she made room for the young rector to pass.

"I am going to inquire how our sick neighbor is to-day," Mr. Donovan answered briefly. And without lingering to talk, as Pinkie hoped he would, he crossed the street to the house Mr. Sandwith had just entered.

She could see Mr. Sandwith still waited by the open window of the parlor and she noticed that at the entrance of Mr. Donovan he placed on his head the beaver he had been nursing on his knee. "What a hateful old man he is!" Pinkie commented, appreciating that the action was intended to declare the iron-master's aversion to showing "hat honor" to "hireling preachers." The rector took a seat at the other parlor window, so Pinkie was able to watch both their profiles. Soon it was evident, from certain motions of the two heads, a conversation had begun and a conversation of a heated nature, for the motions became more emphatic. Now, as if to avoid disturbing the invalid up stairs, Mr. Sandwith thrust his head out of the window and Pinkie caught the sound of his wrathful voice saying: "For thee is of the sort that creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sin." Mr. Donovan instantly followed his eccentric example and thrust his head out of his window answering in spirited retort. After which Pinkie saw Mr. Donovan rise and leave the house. He crossed the street with a white face, mounted the stairs to his own room, ignoring Pinkie's excited questions,

and she could hear the door close with a very positive sound.

Pinkie eagerly scanned the street in hope of discovering a passer-by into whose ears she might pour an incident so scandalous. But no one appeared in the silent street save Empty Ned, the village half-wit. Vexation at the sight of no better confidant made her thus victimize the unfortunate:

“Well, Ned, what do you think I dreamed last night? That you were dead.”

Empty Ned had on an old fur cap and wore as usual a nosegay—a bunch of sweet-williams—pinned against his ragged coat. He blinked at Miss Pinkie with child-like blue eyes, his head on one side and the fingers of his two hands working the air as if he pressed the stops of an invisible flute. He had paused to tell the time-worn news that he was leaving Dunkirk to be married, but would return by Sunday next to pump the asthmatic organ at the little Church on the Hill, as the Episcopal chapel was called.

“Did they bury me from the church?” he asked with anxiety.

“No, they didn’t,” was the cruel reply.

The tears of the half-wit began to flow. “Oh, I hoped I’d be buried from the church!” he said sobbingly. “I wanted to be buried from the church!”

Pinkie had touched a sore spot in the soul of Empty Ned. For years he had pleaded with the different rectors of the Episcopalians at Dunkirk to recommend his confirmation, and had been refused on grounds of his irresponsibility. When the bishop made his annual visit to Dunkirk Empty Ned never failed to pay him a formal

call, carrying a fan, although it might be mid-winter, and wearing white cotton gloves too long in the fingers. On Communion Sundays, seated in the organ loft, the half-wit, perhaps holding his prayer-book upside down, could be seen forlornly weeping while privileged others knelt at the chancel rail. Never Dives from the depths of torment longed for the bosom of Abraham as the half-wit for the white heights of sanctification, where in a haze of glory he saw the bowed figures of Pinkie herself, her mother, Miss Eudocia, Mr. Blair Nandine, the county judge, and the rest of the congregation—all save himself. So tears continued to wet his cheeks until, awakened to his duties, Empty Ned labored again at the organ while the choir sang: "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing."

"Don't cry!" Pinkie said hastily, seeing the effect of her words. "Dreams go by contraries, Ned, so you'll have a church funeral after all."

"You're sure?" The face suddenly became radiant. Empty Ned broke into his sad, silly laugh and clapped his hands. "You're sure? Then I'm going off right away to tell everybody." He departed with his strange, half-dancing gait. At that moment Mr. Donovan appeared at the door and seeing him called him back. The rector's face still showed marks of excitement.

"Ned," he said, in an undertone so Pinkie might not hear; "take this out to Mr. Joshua Sandwith's house and give it to Miss Harmony. And don't loiter on the way. It is a very important letter."

Empty Ned went off with the air of a papal nuncio. Among the rectors of "his" church, as he called it, none had been kinder than Mr. Donovan, who had promised

him that when next the bishop came to Dunkirk he too would receive his confirmation blessing. Joyfully he felt in his pocket for the remaining sweetmeats a grocer had given him that morning and munching these he went quickly on his mission.

Empty Ned was one of Mr. Donovan's most ardent admirers, but the young clergyman, although he had been in Dunkirk only one year, had won popularity both within and without his parish. His congregation was neither numerous nor rich and his little church, or rather chapel, was the smallest house of worship in Dunkirk. This stood half-way up "Jail Hill," as though it had stopped short in its effort to reach a rocky height equal to that occupied by its proud rival, the Reformed Presbyterian. Mr. Donovan's circuit was as extensive as his church was small. He was the only Episcopal clergyman for many miles around and none could have been more zealous in the pursuit of his duties. Work among the wood-cutters and charcoal-burners in the mountain regions and lonely valleys of the county took him on rides as lengthy and arduous as those of old Doctor Proudfoot, his friend and companion on many a mission to sufferers in body and soul.

When Empty Ned plied the knocker at Burnham, Hecla was crossing the hall. Mr. Sandwith had come home in a state bordering on apoplexy, accusing Mr. Donovan of insulting conduct toward him. It was characteristic of Hecla's worship of her father that she never doubted his judgment of facts. She was therefore convinced that the rector was wholly to blame in the quarrel, and her distress over the peril to Mr. Sandwith's health still filled her with indignation.

"I got a letter for Miss Harmony," Empty Ned announced when Hecla opened the door.

"Give it to me," she said.

"It's for Miss Harmony," Empty Ned reiterated, handing her the letter; "he told me to bring it."

"Whom do you mean by 'he'?"

"Why, the rector of my church, of course!"

"Mr. Donovan!" Hecla whitened with anger. "Then take it back to him at once!"

That the rector should, under the present circumstances, write to her sister seemed to her gross impertinence, and she could not conceive of Harmony's wishing to receive the letter.

Empty Ned shook his foolish smiling face.

"I tell you you must take this back to Mr. Donovan!"

The half-wit put his hands behind his back in refusal, then as Hecla looked at him in helpless irritation, he gave her another smile and ran off down the path with fantastic skipping steps.

As Hecla closed the door she heard her father coming down the stairs. Fearing the sight of Mr. Donovan's letter would provoke him to a new fit of choler she passed hastily into the sitting-room and dropped the letter into her writing-desk.

In the meantime Miss Pinkie Tathem waiting on the doorstep for passers-by had found listeners more appreciative of scandal than Empty Ned, and she could confidently say that by evening half the town was discussing her own special version of the quarrel between the iron-master and Mr. Donovan.

CHAPTER XVI

I AM NO STRONGER THAN MY SEX

Wentworth secured the nomination for the office of county treasurer. Joshua Sandwith canvassed energetically for his nephew and his party at large. The Democrats had shown that they intended to win by fair means or foul, and the bribery and corruption of the campaign had scarcely ever been excelled. When the chairman of the Republican committee said to the iron-master: "Funds will have to be spent freely, Mr. Sandwith, if we expect to get the better of our enemies," the reply had been: "Well, thee knows I do not approve of money being spent on elections, but if the other side is spending it thee can count on my subscription. The right party must gain the day." Hecla had shared her father's interest in the campaign. She and Hetty Waln drove around to the outlying farm-houses and endeavored to gain votes for Wentworth Oliver. Thus, though she and her cousin were separated, she had the satisfaction of feeling she was working for him and furthering his ambitions. The fact that she could do something for him without breaking her resolution not to see him was a source of much secret happiness to her.

As the days passed the Saturday-night fights between Dave Sandwith's workmen and the "Corkonians" em-

ployed on the Dunkirk branch of the Pennsylvania and Erie Canal became more notorious. This warfare of stones and shillalahs was waged in front of the rival saloons of "Sal" Dickson and "Biddy" Landrigan, which stood on the Big Road facing the Friends' Meeting House. Sal Dickson's husband, a blacksmith, had ruined himself at Biddy Landrigan's and on his decease, his widow, turning the shop into a saloon, vowed she would put the Irishwoman out of business. The iron-workers were patrons of Sal Dickson's and the canal-diggers quenched their thirst at her neighbor's. Christy Pickle was kept busy leading Mog home by the ear in these encounters. The jigger-boss, aided by the Lord, as he maintained, had on several occasions used his crutch "to chastise the weekid that cumbered the earth." As for Archy McSwords, his fondness for mixing in these Saturday-night mêlées had reduced his Mexican regimentals to rags.

At last the day before the state elections arrived, and the carrying of Pennsylvania by the Democratic party would virtually decide the presidential elections in November. Wentworth Oliver had won distinction by his stump speeches in favor of Fremont, and Joshua Sandwith's old workmen and mule teams had scoured the county, organizing mass meetings even in that obdurate Democratic stronghold, Dutch Valley. The Republicans were now trusting to the exhilarating effect of a grand street-parade at Dunkirk, much money and thought having been spent on this demonstration that it might surpass everything of the kind which hitherto had taken place in the county.

From daybreak the roads to Dunkirk had been

crowded with rustic vehicles and the streets of the town now surged with spectators from the entire countryside. Seldom had the town been the scene of such excitement. The Red Lion Inn and the saloons collected together at what was known as "Strychnine Corner" were doing a thriving business over the bar, which manifested itself in street rowdyism. Peter Waddles, the old Democratic sheriff, and his deputies showed their devotion to their party by arresting as many Republicans engaged in drunken brawls as possible. A number of the iron-workers had been locked up in the jail and Joshua Sandwith had vainly striven to effect their release on bail that they might vote on the morrow.

The songs and humors of the campaign added to the entertainment of the expectant crowd. Shouts of "Buck and Breck" were answered by the "staccato cheer" of Fremonters and cries of "Down with the cut-throat Bucaneers," "Boo-Cannon," "Free Speech, Free Press, Free Soil," "We'll give 'em Jessie when we rally round the polls." Parties of young men waving hats and canes jostled more sober citizens as they sang:

"There's an old Gray Horse, whose name is Buck,
Du da, du da;
His dam was folly and his sire bad luck,
Du da, du da da,"

to the tune of *Camptown Races*. Allusions to Buchanan's "ten-cent wages" clashed with accusations that Fremont was in league with the pope. And so the gamut of political ridicule and buffoonery was run.

The procession was to take place at eleven o'clock in the morning and afterward there were to be open-air

speeches on the Diamond. Hecla had gone into town early to see the parade from her cousin Jane Hamilton's steps. Here she found a number of her friends, among whom were Richard Hallett and Rhoda Markham, who was paying Jane a visit. Hecla was far from being in good spirits. She dreaded the effect of the day's demonstrations on her father, whose campaign activities she had been unable to check; and she also feared that Dave, whom she caught sight of in the thick of the most disorderly crowd, would get into trouble.

A blare of discordant brass music announced the coming of the procession, and Hecla with a tightening of the heart saw Wentworth ride by with the other candidates. Then came the old Battalion Day companies in their motley uniforms; after these a personified Fremont in pioneer costume on a white horse, conducted by Indian scouts and followed by a sturdy band of backwoodsmen shouldering axes; floats representing the allegorical figure of Kansas, stricken down by a red-shirted Missouri rough; an auction block with a kneeling mother begging for her child; the planter Legree and Uncle Tom; then an unsteady hay-wagon trimmed with pine branches and holding children dressed as the states of the Union; and farmers' buxom daughters on plump plow-horses, and fife and drum corps that pierced the air with their shrill notes.

After Wentworth had passed Hecla paid little heed to the parade until her father and his workmen appeared. The procession had already reached the Diamond and the political candidates had ranged themselves in line to review the passing troops, when she caught sight of Mr. Sandwith seated beside Archy Mc-

Swords in the first ore-wagon. Relieved that he seemed well and in good spirits she joined the others on the doorstep in waving her handkerchief.

As the team passed on, followed by the others filled with the Sandwith workmen, suddenly from the crowd came a fusillade of stones, cabbage-stalks and other missiles, and the air was filled with hoots and catcalls. The workmen, recognizing their enemies, the canal-diggers, scrambled over the sides of the wagons. The skittish mules took fright, and the next moment the street was a scene of riot. A stone struck a pane in one of Mrs. Hamilton's parlor windows. Jane, Rhoda Markham and Hetty in alarm hastily retreated up stairs, leaving Hecla and Richard Hallett alone on the doorstep.

Hecla, regardless of the flying stones, had her eyes fixed on Mr. Sandwith who, deserted by Archy McSwords, was endeavoring to restrain the mules from dashing up the street.

"Help my father," she cried to Hallett, "he will be killed."

"Go inside," the Englishman ordered and then shouldered his way into the struggling, panic-stricken crowd.

Hecla ran to the parlor window and breathlessly watched him on his way to her father's aid. She saw him take the head mule by the bit and hold back the team until Archy, seeing Mr. Sandwith's plight, struck down his assailant and once more clambered back into his seat and seized the reins. Hecla sighed with relief as she watched the team pass on briskly up the street.

But her relief was short-lived. Wentworth, with the marshal and several others at the head of the procession,

seeing the *mêlée*, had ridden back, and Hecla, almost immediately on catching sight of him, saw him fall from his horse, struck on the head by a stone. Richard Hallett was one of those who went to his assistance.

At the sight Hecla almost lost consciousness. She leaned against the casement while dimly on her ear above the oaths and screams of women came the solemn tolling of a bell. The tolling came from the Little Church on the Hill, where Empty Ned, obedient to orders from the Democrats, was pulling the belfry rope.

Presently the parlor door was thrust open and the Englishman and two of Mr. Sandwith's workmen entered, carrying the limp body of Wentworth Oliver. "Do what you can for him," Hallett said to her; "I shall try to fetch Doctor Proudfoot." Then as they were turning away he added: "Your father is safe."

Hecla, left alone with her cousin's unconscious body, approached the sofa where it had been placed and fell on her knees. She had no belief but that he was dead. Fate had planned this deed that she might suffer all the anguish of losing him for ever.

"Wentworth," she whispered.

Her gaze fastened on the closed lids and mouth that drooped as if in disdain of life's drama, its brevity and emptiness. A sudden weariness of struggle came over her and she put her arms about his head while her lips fell against his breast.

She seemed to sink with him into the dark underworld of death.

Outside the window the confusion waged, and over it all came the distant tolling bell, mocking and measuring the fleeting things of life.

When consciousness came back to her she was in Wentworth's arms and he was chafing her temples.

"Hecla," he was saying, "do you know me?"

"Yes, I know," she murmured, "it is you—Wentworth."

And wearily, with content, she let her cheek fall once more against his breast.

"Hecla," he asked, smoothing her hair, "what was it? What made you faint?"

"It was you," she answered, still like one in a dream; "because I thought you were killed. O Wentworth, Wentworth, if anything had happened to you!"

"And you cared—you found you cared that much?"

"Yes, I cared that much."

"You love me, Hecla, after all!" The joy of it choked his voice.

"Yes, I love you, Wentworth. I love you—I have always loved you, always, *always*. I know it now," she went on softly. "I knew it when they brought you in, dead as I thought—dead. O Wentworth, Wentworth!"

"Hecla," he exclaimed, his lips against her hair, "Hecla."

"Oh, the pain, the pain of the last few weeks, the misery, the struggles I have gone through! What suffering not to see you, to have you away from me. Tell me you care for me—*tell* me, Wentworth!"

"Can you doubt it, Hecla? Haven't I loved you all my life? Have I ever loved any one but you? What do you think my suffering has been all these weeks? Do you suppose I found it easy to keep away from you—that I have not had my struggle, too? If it had not been for my promise to Uncle Joshua! But he will

forgive me, Hecla. He will understand; he won't oppose our loving each other when he knows how much we care. Hecla, Hecla, what happiness this day has brought me!" He had gathered her closer to his breast and he was kissing her now on her eyes and mouth, kissing her with all the hunger of passion long unsatisfied.

For a moment only she yielded to his embrace, let his emotion claim its right upon her own answering lips. Then suddenly pierced with the sharp sense of her awakening, she struggled to free herself; her strange eyes meeting his with all their blight reborn in them—the somber look that seemed to invite the tragedies of life.

"Oh, this is madness!" she breathed. "I have forgotten—forgotten everything. Wentworth, it is my fault. It's I who am guilty. Forgive me, Wentworth, for making you break your promises. Ah, what would my father say, what would he think of me—me whom he trusted! Wentworth, I am ashamed, *ashamed!*" And she pressed her palms upon her eyes. "I feel as if I had just awakened out of a dream. I don't know myself. It hasn't been my real nature that has acted so. Wentworth, forget what has happened. You should be true to your best self. You must not love me—we must not love each other. Ah, how weak I've been—I who should be strong!"

"It is too late, Hecla. You can not deny me¹ your love. We were destined for each other. Nothing can—nothing shall separate us. We shall win your father's consent, do not fear!"

"It is not too late. It is never too late to do what is right. My father—Wentworth, do you think I should

ever try to persuade him to act against his conscience, his own convictions? I revere him and his feelings too much. No, I shall never do it; never so rob him of his own respect!"

"It's only a prejudice, Hecla, what Uncle Joshua feels about our loving each other. Would you sacrifice our love for a mere prejudice?"

"A prejudice? It may be. I can not tell," she said dully, her face still pressed upon her palms. "I only know that it keeps us apart—that it must always keep us apart!"

Then it was that Mrs. Hamilton and the others entered the parlor.

CHAPTER XVII

TWO DAUGHTERS OF ONE MOTHER

The elections were over and Wentworth had won his office. The wound received in the street riot on the day of the parade and the rumor which spread that the attack on him was premeditated had greatly helped his cause. He had been able the night following his accident to appear at a mass-meeting, where he delivered one of the most successful speeches of the campaign, and he had been one of the few Republicans elected in the county the next day.

Hecla had been confined to bed for a day as the result of the shock she had received. Her confession of love made to Wentworth after her faint caused her infinite suffering. All that had been gained during the previous months, when Wentworth and she had kept apart, seemed lost through the weakness she had shown in Mrs. Hamilton's parlors. She could not doubt now that she had more than a cousin's regard for Wentworth. Her recognition of the fact that she had been deceiving herself had the effect of making her resolve the more firmly to avoid her cousin. Again she fought a battle with her feelings as she had done the night after the ride back from Moshannon Hall, when she had gone to her room and burned Wentworth's letters, with the

prophetic phrases of the whippoorwills in her ears. She told herself that while she loved her cousin her emotional response to his passion the day of the parade had been less love than sorrow and despair at seeing him lying apparently dead on the sofa; that she had not been herself in what she said and did. And thus arguing with her heart she at last believed that she had conquered her love. And so with the peace that came to her through the conviction, she took up the routine of her quiet life.

It was after this that she had occasion one day to use the neglected secretary in the sitting-room. As she turned the key in the brass scutcheoned lock with its olive-bearing dove and the legend "Peace", the memory of Mr. Donovan's letter she had placed there came back to her. She was astonished that she could have forgotten the visit of Empty Ned and the note for Harmony which had so filled her with indignation against its sender. Hecla felt deeply remorseful that she had never mentioned the matter to her sister. Still, there had been some excuse for her forgetfulness. Her father had been ill as a consequence of his choler that day, and following that had come the announcement of Wentworth's nomination, which had thrown him into another state of excitement continuing through the entire campaign. Hecla had been in such continued anxiety about him that the incident of the letter had been driven from her mind.

She now took the letter from the desk with much the same feeling of repugnance as when Empty Ned handed it to her, and went at once to Harmony's bedroom. At her light knock Harmony opened the door

with a look of surprise, it was so seldom any one intruded on her privacy there.

"Were you lying down, Harmony?"

"No. Will you come in?" She said this with some reluctance.

Hecla, as she entered, glanced around the room and noticing no evidence of Harmony's having been employed she wondered, as she had often done before, how her stepsister spent her time shut in her room. Were her hours devoted entirely to prayer and meditation?

Harmony stood with her back to the amber light of autumn that stole richly through the curtained window into her bare cell-like chamber, white, fragrant, like Harmony herself. Her warm brown hair—the heavy hair which, according to Hetty, "took her strength"—hung about her like a nun's veil.

"Harmony," Hecla said with embarrassment and regret, "here is a letter for you. It came the day Mr. Donovan so grossly insulted father. It is from him."

At the name of the young rector Harmony's face showed a quick shadow of pain. Hecla did not notice what a pale resigned figure it was standing before her; she was too accustomed to her sister's meek silent way to be struck by the sadness in her expression to-day.

"I am very sorry, Harmony, that I forgot about the letter. You know how ill father was that day. I am not trying to excuse myself, but merely stating how it happened I did not speak of it at once. I suppose the letter is an apology for Mr. Donovan's treatment of father. Of course you would not have wished to accept it, and in not accepting it you put an end to an acquaintance which you know was a mistake."

Harmony took the letter Hecla held out to her. Her face had suddenly grown so pale that her sister said concernedly: "Harmony, why do you look so strange? Are you feeling faint?"

"A little, perhaps," was the vague answer, and Harmony sat down by the window with her face turned from her sister.

"Let me get you my lavender water." And Hecla hastily left the room.

When she returned she paused at the door in indignant surprise at what she saw. Harmony had opened the letter and, with face bent over the sheet, was reading the last lines. Before Hecla could speak she let the letter fall, and burying her face on the window-sill, broke into tears. Hecla went over to her, saying sympathetically: "What is it? Has he insulted you, too?"

There was no answer, only convulsive sobbing breaths.

"Tell me, Harmony, what is the matter?" And Hecla laid her hand gently on the other's arm.

Harmony passionately thrust away the caressing touch, and Hecla stood a moment mute with astonishment. Then her sister raised her face and she was shocked at the change in it. All the accustomed mildness was gone, and instead Hecla beheld an expression of anger and outrage she had never seen it wear.

"Why do you look at me so strangely, Harmony?" Hecla exclaimed. Then: "What made you read the letter? I knew him capable of insulting even a woman."

"You think he has insulted me?"

Hecla could hardly believe it was Harmony's voice that she heard.

"I have reason to think so after he insulted our father."

"He did not insult our father!"

"What do you mean by that?" Hecla spoke in ominously quiet tones.

"Our father insulted him!"

"You prefer, then, to believe him rather than your own father?"

"I believe what is true!"

Hecla's passionate look matched her sister's.

"You forget yourself. How dare you accuse our father of not speaking the truth!"

"He was in the wrong!"

"My father in the wrong!" Hecla's voice expressed the concentration of her whole nature: family pride, prejudice, the religion of filial love. She was astounded at this attack from Harmony, invariably pliant, humble, sweet.

"*Your* father!" Harmony caught up the cutting stress of the pronoun. "Yes, he is your father and not mine. Add that I am only a half-sister; that this is *your* home, and that I have no right in it except as one on sufferance! Have I not felt it all—though we had the same mother? Have you not always asserted dominion over me because you hold a superior place in the household? Have you not dictated, called me to account for my actions, slighted, insulted me? Now you have interfered with my most sacred affairs. It is the second time you have done so!" As she ceased she reached down and picked up the letter from the floor.

"You mean the letter, Harmony?"

Hecla spoke as from across a gulf that suddenly

divided her stepsister and herself. Nothing had ever before brought this sharp realization of blood difference. The gravity of the thing wrung the anger out of her voice.

“How could you? Had you no pity, no kindness?”

“You are unjust, Harmony. I told you how it happened. How much better if you had never seen the letter! It would have spared you pain.”

“Spared me pain!” The wretchedness of the cry revealed to Hecla the secret of Harmony’s secluded weeks. She could not repress her surprise.

“Then you love him!”

In spite of Harmony’s outburst she could scarce credit her sister with sentiments for one who had committed what she believed to be an unforgivable offense against her father. After a proud pause she added: “I have no wish, Harmony, to govern your actions, as you imagine; I am very sorry I forgot to give you the letter. Indeed, I am sorry, Harmony.”

“What good can your sorrow do? Can that help or heal my life? I feel I hate you for what you have done. And with this hatred in my heart—” She stopped; when she spoke again her face was old with anguish. “Oh, I have lost my way through you—the path I struggled to keep alone without help from God or man. I dreamed that God was taking pity on my prayers and leading me to Him. I waited for this letter. I thought it must come to prove that he had not wilfully insulted my father—your father. I said I need not give up a friendship that was dear to me if he regrets the quarrel, if he had not done all the town accuses him of doing—”

“He denies that he was in the wrong?”

For a moment Harmony did not speak, then she said in a low voice: "He is sorry over what happened, and he asks me to be his wife."

"My father can not prevent your marrying whom you wish."

Harmony passed her hands over her eyes.

"I gave him up in the weeks of waiting," she said brokenly. "I gave my love to God instead. And what I gave God I can not retract, however unworthy the offering. But why do I speak of this to you, Hecla? You do not understand. You have never had to put away your heart's desires."

"We are nearer than you think," was Hecla's answer. "I have had my own bitterness, my own renunciation. I have had to give up love for duty's sake."

"You!"

The surprise in her sister's tone made Hecla realize how often those who are nearest to us are wholly oblivious of our secret tragedies.

"I have gone through so much," Harmony went on in a voice of dry anguish. "I struggled. I had my battles. I put love aside. I thought the smoke of my burnt sacrifice would reach God. I have no hope now. I shall be encompassed again with darkness—the light has died out! Some day I may regain what has been lost me this day, by prayer, by tears and penance. Ah, Hecla, you have taken my religion from me!"

"Then you never had any," Hecla cried in torture at her words. "You are killing me with your injustice. How can you say such things to me, Harmony? To tell me that you hate me when I have thought all my life of your happiness!"

"I can not forgive you, Hecla; I can not. It is you who have caused the failure of my life."

"Harmony, say you do not mean such cruel things," Hecla implored her.

But Harmony did not answer. Her head had fallen again on her bent arm, her hair veiling her tears.

When Hecla reached her own room she sat down on the bed. It was her nature to fight against the weakness of tears, but now slowly they worked their way down her cheeks. Nothing like the scene she had just lived through had happened before in the family. For a while she forgot the astonishing fact of Harmony's love and championship of Mr. Donovan in the blow dealt her sisterly devotion. She had been accustomed to consider herself the protector of the household. Her father had relied on her judgment and good sense. She could hardly credit what Harmony had said and not for a moment did she accept its justice. Whatever had been her mistakes they had been mistakes born of extreme solicitude. If she had not met emergencies, fought family battles, who would have done so? She had considered Harmony particularly in need of her guardianship; and she wondered now over her new assertive spirit, feeling unconsciously her respect for her increase.

She was aroused from her mood by hearing voices that came through the open window. She had left her father lying on the porch-seat in the yellow autumn sunshine, comfortably dozing, his wig pulled over his nose with his usual contempt for appearances. She rose from the bed and looked down into the garden.

She saw Mr. Sandwith standing on the front steps, as if barring the house to an ill-favored stranger in a slouch hat.

"No, there is no negro here by that name," she heard her father say in tones of Roman firmness.

Hecla instantly divined the man to be a Southerner in search of a fugitive slave and that the slave was Noah, the coachman. It was not the first time slave-hunters had come to the house, which, with characteristic Quaker zeal, the iron-master offered as an asylum for negro refugees. She wondered if warning had been given Noah. Then she remembered he had been sent on a farm errand and could not yet have returned. She listened anxiously.

"You sure they ain't no nigger by that name round here? I got news pretty positive. He's an old nigger with a wen on his forehead."

Hecla hung on her father's reply. She did not wish Noah's capture, nor did she wish her father to lie. Harmony's insinuation that her father had not spoken the truth about the quarrel with Mr. Donovan came to mind, and it was a relief when she heard him answer:

"There is no negro calling himself by that name here, I tell thee!"

It was what Mr. Sandwith would have called a "judicious reply." The iron-master had whimsically given his coachman a biblical name on taking him into service, and Noah had readily agreed to the change. Some altercation followed, but the man, not having secured a search-warrant from the Dunkirk sheriff, finally went off. Hecla crossed to a side window and curiously watched him depart. The family factotum, Karl, was

coming along the orchard way, a handkerchief spread over his beaver for fear of roosting turkeys. The two men met, and Hecla at once suspected that Karl would give the slave-hunter the information he sought. She believed the German was revengeful despite the child-like manner that imposed on her father. He had been for the last few days "in bad smell," as he phrased it, with the iron-master. Karl was, in fact, returning from town with a sense of his personal injuries swelled by a talk with Miss Pinkie Tathem on the subject of the Sandwiths and their failings. Hecla leaned over the balusters and called to Mr. Sandwith:

"Father, Karl is in the orchard talking to the man who is after Noah!"

Mr. Sandwith stood in the hall winding up the old Dutch clock—an act he performed himself with great regularity, being of the belief that if the clock ran down misfortune was sure to befall his roof. At Hecla's words he hastily seized his cane and left the house.

Hecla, regretting her imprudence, hastily ran down the stairs and reached the porch. Karl was coming leisurely on his way. To something he said she heard her father exclaim: "Thee lies!" and strike him with his cane. Karl made no resistance except to protest in a tearful voice as the blows rained down upon his shoulders. Suddenly the cane dropped from the iron-master's hand and he staggered and fell.

With a cry of apprehension Hecla ran and, kneeling, looked into her father's face. What she saw there told her the doctor's fears were realized: Mr. Sandwith in a fit of rage had ruptured a blood-vessel and lay unconscious.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MYSTERY OF TIME AND DISTANCE

Little Pitcher sat at the foot of the staircase eating a great golden pear. He had climbed to the attic to get it, after leaving his father's bedroom, where all the family were gathered. Little Pitcher had grown weary of the sad faces and low-toned talk and had stolen away unnoticed. For a week his father had lain in his big poster bed, his face pale almost as the pillow and a yellow silk nightcap pulled down over his head like a candle snuffer. His wardrobe door was ajar, and Little Pitcher had seen all the different wigs of different hues he wore hanging on pegs—a kind of Bluebeard's closet to the child's wondering fancy. Without any of these red, brown or black wigs his father looked strange and old to him. But everything had been strange these last few days. So many people had come and gone—townspeople, country-folk, his father's workmen. And in the kitchen now the terrible old woman, Christy Pickle, sat waiting. Waiting for what?

Little Pitcher might have felt lonely and neglected had he not been accustomed to being by himself and finding entertainment in his own ideas.

He was thinking now of his next First Day sermon. Little Pitcher was fond of playing Friends' Meeting

on First Day afternoons in the sewing-room with Molly Tucker, the old family servant. He preferred to meditate over his sermons in advance in spite of his father's telling him Friends were moved by the Spirit when they preached. His sermons were on a great number of subjects; but he was partial to the theme of intemperance. He had once heard "Old Man Hunt," as he was called, a hunchback who spoke at the court-house to excited audiences, and his mind had since been filled with the horror of drink. Intemperance meant to Little Pitcher the picture of a huge red goblet, out of which a green serpent raised a writhing head. Old Man Hunt had pointed to this with a long shaking forefinger as he delivered his address. And it was with all the vigor of his infant voice that Little Pitcher would cry to Molly: "Don't do it! Keep from it!" Molly was usually nodding, mechanically chewing the sweetened rag usually in her mouth, but at the shrill command she would start out of her nap and look at Little Pitcher with a stupid half-frightened air.

The house was very still. The only sounds came from overhead, when persons went in and out of his father's room or held whispered conferences in the upper hall. Everybody moved very softly, and when the old gray rabbit, his father's pet, made its appearance at the front door Little Pitcher fancied it hopped toward him more lightly than was its wont.

Little Pitcher held his pear out of the old gourmand's reach, and gazing at him gravely, recited Jane Taylor's poem of *The Notorious Glutton*. The rabbit, working its nose at the sight of food, squatted in front of him, its paws crossed and its ears raised and dis-

playing a white paunch—an example of greediness as shameful as the celebrated Mrs. Duck. The old clock seemed to listen, too, as it ticked on.

They made an odd party, the old Dutch clock, the rabbit and the child, with his solemn gray eyes, high forehead and tumble of tight black curls.

The clock and Little Pitcher were friends of long standing. The foot of the stairs was his favorite seat, because from there he could watch the rocking ship on the clock's face and hear its tale of passing time.

Now in the hush of the house the tick-tack sounded louder than usual. The old, old story, told to-day with so much emphasis, riveted the child's attention on the venerable family monitor. Little Pitcher forgot his sermon, the rabbit and the golden pear in his hand, and considered for the hundredth time the mystery of the clock.

The clock was of a reverend age. Carved on its mahogany case were the names of generations of Sand-with owners. Little Pitcher knew the story of how in Revolutionary days the clock had crossed the sea with muskets stuffed in its case. The greatest charm of the clock for the child was, however, the little ship that rocked to and fro on green waves over the dial, where the hands moved like the legs of a spider in her web. The ship was always sailing on and never reaching harbor. Little Pitcher never remembered seeing it stop on its journey. It had been his earliest delight to watch his father wind up the clock, always at a fixed time, as if the winding of clocks were the most important duty of life. Something would happen, his father often said, if the clock ran down. But that mysterious "some-

thing" never had happened, because the pine-cone pendulums swung placidly within the case and the ship cheerfully went on its rocking way.

Little Pitcher meditated a long time over ships and the people he had heard of who had crossed the ocean in them. But these meditations came suddenly to an end as he noticed something peculiar was affecting the clock. It seemed to him the ship began to sway more slowly and that the ticking was not as loud as it had been a moment before. Yet the house was very still. The whispers and passing of footsteps in the upper hall had ceased.

With a curious chill Little Pitcher gazed at the old time-piece. Yes, the ship was really moving slower. Finally it tilted sidewise and remained careened. Was it becalmed or had it reached port at last?

He sat in fascinated terror at the silence of the clock.

There was the sound of an opening door, and Molly Tucker came down the stairs in her awkward waddling fashion, calling his name as she descended. Little Pitcher did not heed her. She gathered him up in her arms, and still unable to speak, he pointed a trembling finger at the great mahogany time-keeper. Molly's gaze followed the finger, and with a smothered ejaculation she bore Little Pitcher up stairs to his father's death-chamber.

CHAPTER XIX

A DEAD FATHER AND A LIVING DAUGHTER

The day of Joshua Sandwith's funeral was bleak and gray. November's blight had rusted the gold of Indian summer. The waste woods bled their last red leaves to ground; on blurred pasture-land cattle huddled in melancholy groups, and across the sky like a sentence was scrawled the long black flight of crows, while sadly the sunlight fell, fingering the memoried things of earth. Nature was bare from autumn garnering; only the corn-fields lay like battle-fields stacked with rusty arms. It was a day full of symbols of death. The landscape seemed a vast bier, from which a palpable soul swept skyward in the ghostliness of wind-blown dust.

Despite rough weather the countryside had collected to attend the burial, coming in all manner of vehicles that lined the road well-nigh from Dunkirk to the house. A midday repast had been served the throng early arriving from a distance, and to these sympathizers, as the funeral hour approached, the town added its hundreds.

Richard Hallett, who had come down from Snow Shoe to attend the funeral, followed the others. As he walked up the drive-way he could see the motley crowd standing around the gray old mansion under the

stripped walnut boughs. There were hale-cheeked farmers in great-coats holding their whips; wood-choppers from the ridges in cowhide boots and knitted jackets; dingy-faced colliers, employés and pensioners of the Works; the rich and poor of the neighborhood: in all a gathering worthy the passing of a great personage.

Making his way through the sober, uncomfortable-looking groups, Richard Hallett heard honoring epitaphs fall from the general tongue. Joshua Sandwith had never turned the needy from his door; he had never asked over a certain fair price for his wheat, no matter how high the market was; his word was as good as his bond; these and like testimonies to the honesty and worth of the iron-master he heard as he walked on.

Into the house—where, after the custom of country funerals, the women were gathered—an unbroken stream flowed round the body lying in the long double parlor. There was no badge of mourning on the door; no flowers on the coffin or anywhere. Richard Hallett noticed this, and he was impressed with the simplicity and gravity of death that reigned in the room. Nature's law had been fulfilled and none had attempted to soften its rigor.

The family were gathered in an upper chamber, where they sat in silence. And that silence gradually diffused itself through the house and spread to those waiting outside.

Finally there was a stir. Six of Mr. Sandwith's workmen, scarred by time and faithful service to the iron-master, lifted the coffin on their broad backs and bore it away, followed by their fellow employés in a rugged crowd. They had claimed this honor by virtue of an

old right of workmen to bury their iron-masters, and Joshua Sandwith had been well content thus to be carried to his grave.

There were some looking on who realized that in the demise of Joshua Sandwith there passed away the last of the long race of old-fashioned iron manufacturers of Pennsylvania. Already the industry of which he had been head and front was dying, its kindly feudal relations changing. Another era, which substituted intricate mechanical devices for simple honest labor of the hand, was about to dawn. Henceforth might be expected a new order of master and workmen without the humanness and charity of former times.

The funeral went slowly on its journey. The iron-master's family, without mourning garments, walked after the workmen, and behind these was the long procession. Across the meadow, where brown sheep ceased their nibbling at the bewildering sight; past gray blur of brier and podded weed and sumach lifting its hearse-like plumes; up the steep hill that skirted the Friends' Meeting House the procession wound its way. Clouds of sweeping dust made the figures dim and spectral as they moved along; and overhead the sinking sun, piercing the dull vapor, shot out misty rays like spokes of a vast chariot-wheel rolling across the universe. Here, at the intersection of the roads, could be seen overlooking Dunkirk the high hilltop on which, hidden by hoary mountain pines, stood the private burying-ground of the Sandwiths.

In the meantime a hired vehicle was slowly nearing Dunkirk. Inside of this Benjamin Truelove, the young

Quaker preacher, sat with bowed head and arms folded on the breast of his sober traveling cloak. He had engaged the conveyance early that morning at a small settlement miles from Dunkirk, bidding the driver proceed until ordered to stop. From time to time the coachman had put questions to the absorbed and holy figure, but his curiosity was only rewarded by the command, "Drive on." Whither were they bound? the driver had asked himself. And it seemed indeed that Benjamin Truelove did not himself know their destination. A voice, he believed, had spoken to him in the midst of his gospel labors, and Benjamin Truelove was obeying the voice.

As they approached Dunkirk the preacher lifted his eyes and beheld the funeral train mounting the hill. Ordering the driver to stop, he alighted and stood waiting. When the procession was close by Benjamin Truelove took his place beside the coffin, and they moved on their solemn journey until the burying-ground was reached.

Here, when the coffin was lowered into the earth, a word was put into Benjamin Truelove's mouth. "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*" Having uttered this text the evangelist preached a sermon in which he set forth the fruitful life of the honest man that had been consigned to clay.

Only after he had finished his sermon did he look up. Then his eyes encountered the sweet face of Harmony standing between Dave and Hecla, who, colorless and without tears, was holding little Jervis by the hand.

Seeing them, the young seer realized for the first time that he had been led many miles that day to preach a sermon over the grave of Joshua Sandwith, the iron-master.

Hecla remained in the empty parlors after the reading of the will. As she sat before the fire she could hear from the dining-room the dull sounds of the others at supper. She listened with a sense of her isolation from the rest. How little any one cared but herself, she bitterly thought. Harmony, her married sister Lucia, whom she so seldom saw, Dave, they were only her father's adopted children, and her uncles and aunts had never loved him. She thought of them now discussing the will, judging and misjudging, speculating over her sorrow. With quick impulse she rose, and crossing the hall, shut the door of the sitting-room between them and her. Then she took a candle, and going up stairs to Jervis' cot stood a while looking at him, her father's son, as he slept. Returning to the parlors, she blew out the lights on the table and seated herself in the low rush-bottom chair by the hearth.

The dull November day had ended in a gray twilight, and now fell the fine needles of a cheerless rain. Through the window-panes the misty outer world seemed to reach long tentacles of clutching chill. Hecla, shivering, threw on the flesh-colored cedar fagots, dried pine-cones and broken fir branches. It was the kind of fire she particularly liked, and to-night as she faced the heat it brought back comfort and companionship.

The added fuel burst into instant blaze, the green twigs turned to gold amid a flicker of blue flames; the

bubbling sap made the air of the parlors sweet. In the light of the fire her deep eyes dwelt on the inscription of a letter given her by the lawyer, who had read her father's will. "To my Daughter Hecla in Case I am Surprised by Death." As she read these words a new sense of loneliness and responsibility fell on her spirit. She did not weep, but with a little tightening of the lips she broke the seal and spread the sheet of paper on her lap.

She was awakened from an absorbed second perusal of the letter by a jarring noise, and glancing down, she saw her father's pet rabbit performing its trick of taking the poker in its mouth, shaking it and then letting it drop on the hearth. The grotesque homely antie in which Mr. Sandwith had taken such delight touched her as only familiar things can do, and she leaned over and stroked the timid animal's soft coat of "good Friendly drab," as Mr. Sandwith called it.

She was thus engaged when Wentworth Oliver entered the room. He had paused and was gravely watching the picture she made at the fire. Hecla raised her eyes, startled at seeing him, and as he thus stood in the dusk, the bloom of the hearth upon him, the mourning in which he was dressed brought out strikingly the resemblance to his cousin. Now that her father was dead, and she was free to marry him if she wished, Hecla saw as never before this proof of their nearness of blood. She did not speak, but instinctively her fingers closed on the letter as though it armed her in some way against the feelings his presence aroused.

Moved by an impulse to seek her Wentworth now hesitated. Hecla had instantly suppressed her emotion

as she looked at him, risen as it were like a reproach of love out of a sealed past. He had not seen her alone since her confession of love in Mrs. Hamilton's parlors the day of the street riot, more than a month ago; for Hecla had written to forbid his coming to see her. In the letter she had told him that he must never think of her save in the light of a cousin; that the feelings which had been aroused by his accident were dead in her; that she never would, never could love him. Then had followed the week's illness and death of Joshua Sandwith. Wentworth had called daily at the house to inquire after his uncle and sit by his bedside, but Hecla and he exchanged only a few words in the presence of others; and always when he entered the sick-room she made a point of absenting herself. If Hecla was mistress of herself, it was different with Wentworth. As he stood there he felt his passion mount in him. The sight of her detachment from the family, the pathos of her controlled and lonely sorrow, filled him with longing to hold and comfort her, to break down the barrier that separated them. After a moment in which their eyes met she turned her gaze to the fire, her chin resting on her hand, to which the heat gave a rose-colored transparency, as she apathetically waited for him to address her.

"Hecla, I want to talk to you about your father's will."

Hecla's expression did not alter as she answered:

"Is it necessary to discuss that so soon?"

"No, if it is painful to you."

"It is not painful," she said, "but I can hardly think as yet of this new life without my father, and all it

imposes on me." She shifted her position, sitting back in her chair out of the blaze. Then she added, gazing at the letter in her hand: "Father has left Jervis in my special charge; he wants him to be the Benjamin of my love. I think he feared the poor child would never grow to be a man. Does he seem to you so delicate, Wentworth?"

In her concern about her brother she had unconsciously yielded to the old intimate feelings. Her cousin, after a little hesitation, seated himself opposite her and stared into the flames.

"I don't know, Hecla. He isn't as strong as most boys of his age, but I don't see why he shouldn't outgrow his weakness. The sturdiest men are often delicate as children."

"It is a relief to have you feel that way," she answered gratefully. "What did you want to say about the will?"

Wentworth again fixed his eyes on the fire. "It was a surprise to me," he began awkwardly, "that Uncle Joshua appointed me joint executor and trustee with you of his property."

"Why? Father had great confidence in you as a lawyer."

"He had too much faith in me," Wentworth said bitterly. "I think I ought not to accept the trust."

"Why ought you not?"

"Hecla, do *you* wish it? Do you think it wise?"

"I wish what my father wished," she answered coldly. She realized he was touching on their personal relations, but ignoring this, she went on with dignity. "I think he knew what was best. I am not called upon

to decide what is your duty. It is a matter for you to settle yourself. But why ought you not?" she repeated, her eyes challenging him with self-control. To admit the existence of his love at such a time seemed a sacrilege to her father's memory. Besides, it was clearly her part to show no answering weakness.

Wentworth pushed back a log with his foot as though putting temptation from his heart; yet he said:

"I should do my best, of course."

"It is not necessary to say that."

They were silent a moment; then Hecla went on firmly:

"As long as you have brought up the subject of the will, perhaps it would be well to discuss it further. Will you tell me just what my father directed? Legal phraseology confuses me. Tell me in your own words, please, what he expects of me."

"Briefly, your father has made us co-trustees and executors of his property for the benefit of Jervis until he is of age, and then if he does not show proper capacity for business the trust is to continue through his lifetime. The Works have been left to you, you understand."

"Yes, I know," she said sadly. "But are you sure that Dave has not been left a share in it?"

"No, it has been left to you and Jervis."

Her face showed the trouble of her thoughts. The letter in her hand had perplexed and pained her. In it her father had, after solemnly confiding Jervis to her care, charged her that if at the expiration of his year's lease of the furnace David proved unsuccessful as iron-master, she was to offer the management of the business

to Richard Hallett. Mr. Sandwith, in speaking of the Englishman, had expressed his high esteem and confidence in his abilities, and in closing mentioned his regret that his daughter had refused so suitable a husband.

Wentworth, as he looked at her, noticed how generously grieved she was that Dave had not been left a share in the Works.

"You think Dave will be disappointed, Hecla?" he asked gently.

She did not answer his question. "Tell me," she said anxiously, "what the will said about Dave's re-leasing the Works?"

"There was no mention of that."

Hecla gave a secret sigh of relief. So her father had made no condition regarding Dave's management of the business in the will. She decided quickly that she would not speak of what the letter said on this point. Knowing nothing of the quarrel between Mr. Sandwith and his stepson she was convinced her father had recommended Richard Hallett as the result of his depression over Benjamin Truelove's prophecy. If such were the case, what a wrong to David to tell Wentworth of her father's doubts of his stepson!

"You know," her cousin continued, "the re-leasing of the Works to Dave depends on you as trustee."

"Why should there be any question of the re-leasing of the Works to Dave?" she answered. "He is so capable; he is doing so well."

She did not ask Wentworth to confirm this statement, but she waited expecting his assent. He did not answer, however, knowing what rumors of Dave's inef-

ficiency were current in Dunkirk. Hecla looked at him with a slight frown. So he, too, permitted himself to be influenced by general prejudice against her stepbrother. There was some hostility in Hecla's tone when she next spoke.

"Is there anything else I should know?"

"Yes," he answered. "The house and grounds have been willed to you and Jervis, as well as the residuary of the estate, except the proceeds of six farms that go to Dave, Harmony and Lucia for life. Then there were a few legacies."

Hecla suppressed another inward sigh. How little had been left the others! She feared they would feel slighted and dissatisfied and think ill of her father. She gave no expression of this, however.

"What are my duties?"

"You have the duties of a trustee."

"You mean I shall have personally to take care of the property? But the burden of that will be on your shoulders as a lawyer."

"Of course; there will be the legal matters for me to look after—or for whoever is appointed in my place."

"You think of refusing?" she asked wonderingly, as if the subject had not been mentioned before.

He rose from his chair, laying one hand on the ledge of the high wooden mantel-piece. The gilt mirror reflected the struggle in his face. Hecla was regarding him mutely. She had begun to realize the full import of her position toward the family, and something told her that out of it all difficulties and sorrows would arise. It was her father's wish that Wentworth should help her in preserving the interests of his household,

and she resolved that he must accept the trusteeship, no matter at what cost to him or her.

"I thought you loved my father, Wentworth," she said at last.

"Don't you see I can't accept?" he answered desperately. "I should have to see you almost daily, perhaps. It was you who made the condition we should keep apart. I have grown to believe it best, too, since you refuse to think of our ever being anything to each other. I came to tell you this. What do you think a man is made of, Hecla?"

"Wentworth, I have gone through a good deal. Could you not have spared me this at such a time?" Her voice had suddenly grown tired.

He turned to her instantly, full of remorse. "Forgive me, Hecla; I do not mean to trouble you, only I felt I had to speak, to tell you that I mean to keep my promise of staying away from you, as you asked."

"You have kept it so well I might suppose that by this time you have conquered whatever you felt for me." The words sprang involuntarily, out of repressed emotions in her heart, and she bit her lips over their jealous implication.

"Hecla, you know that isn't true," he exclaimed. "I have not ceased to care. I love you; I shall love you always!" Kneeling beside her, he took her in his arms and kissed her on the lips. She struggled against him, feeling rather than hearing the pent-up passion of his words, that seemed to drown all remembrance for her. Suddenly he released her at the sound of an opening door and, rising to his feet, turned away overcome with shame. It was unforgivable that he should have yielded

to his love on the day she had buried her father, when her sorrow should have been her sanctuary.

Hecla was trembling, still unable to speak, when Hetty entered the parlors. She glanced curiously at the two cousins, then for better scrutiny struck a match.

"Why did thee blow out the lights, Hecla?" she asked. "It's gloomy for thee to be sitting in the dark and without thy supper, too. There is nothing like eating to keep one up. Benjamin Truelove is praying for the household, but I slipped away to see if thee needed anything. Everybody thinks it wonderful the way he was led to come and preach a sermon about thy father being such an honest man. I suppose thee and Wentworth have been discussing the will. Dave and Lucia look disappointed, but I think thy father did perfectly right to consider his own children. It must be trying, though, for Dave and the rest to have thee set over them as the will directs. They'll have to call thee their Sister Joseph. Why, thee seems quite upset. Hadn't thee better try a bite of supper—?"

"I am going up stairs, Hetty," Hecla faltered, still struggling for self-control. "Please say I have gone to bed. Good night."

With an air of including Wentworth in the speech, she moved into the hall and was mounting the stairs, when Mrs. Seaborn Oliver, coming out of the sitting-room, caught sight of her.

"Hecla, surely you are not retiring without saying good night to your aunt?" she cried. Her deep voice had majestic modulations fitting the occasion. She was in heavy mourning, for it was always a sad satisfaction to her to exhume her sacred weeds. Although she felt

in Joshua Sandwith's home a freedom never experienced during his lifetime, she yielded willingly to tears.

"Don't give way too much, niece," she sighed; "remember, we all have our trials. Think of your aunt's sorrows, and how bravely she has borne them! If you desire me to remain with you to-night do not hesitate to say so. I know my duty to my poor dead sister's children."

"Thank you, aunt," Hecla said wearily, "but I think I should rather be alone to-night."

"Ah, yes! We must learn to be alone. It is life's sad lesson. Hecla," she added, and her niece again patiently paused, "I thought you would have worn a more sober gown to-day. It pained me a little to see you dressed as usual and your father taken. He used to hurt my feelings, but I grieve that he is called away, and I felt it right to let the world know by my veil."

"I dressed as my father would have wished."

"Yes, you tried to be a dutiful daughter," the other answered with tearful patronage. "Wentworth will be a great solace; you will need his advice as a fatherless girl. There you are, my son. I was just telling Hecla I was willing to make any sacrifices for her. I always wished to do more, but your uncle—"

"Never mind, mother, Hecla understands." And Wentworth held out his hand to his cousin with appeal for forgiveness in his look. "Good night," she answered, but she did not take his hand. He stood watching her as she mounted the stairs until the turn of the landing hid her candle from sight. His mother was standing by the clock which still pointed to the hour of Joshua Sandwith's death.

“Wentworth,” she solemnly remarked when he had joined her, “Providence moves in a mysterious way with your Uncle Joshua’s clocks. I feel that it is His hand indeed that is on the dial!”

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

THE SCENE BEGINS TO CLOUD

It was the spring of fifty-seven and six months since the passing away of Joshua Sandwith. April had come, but central Pennsylvania, always a little wintry-mooded with its evergreen growths, showed only black and white landscapes. Yet there were some few signs of the year's awakening around the old Sandwith homestead. The willow that Wentworth and Hecla had planted on the island in front of the house was shaking its budding green tresses; peeping wheat blades on the hills beyond the meadow lay like a thin emerald mist; and the Carolina doves were returning to their nests in the black walnut grove.

Hecla and Jervis stood on the porch at Burnham watching the coming of the doves. Little Pitcher, as he peered up gravely into the bare dripping branches, said disappointedly:

"Why, Sister Hecla, the doves have forgotten to bring their olive leaves with them!"

"Doves don't carry olive twigs in their beaks any more, Little Pitcher. It was only in the days of Noah and the Ark. When you see it in pictures it means that they are the spirit of peace."

"And aren't our doves spirits of peace, too, Sister Hecla?"

"I hope they are," Hecla smiled as she patted his cheek. "But now go play, dear. There's Cousin Wentworth coming up the path and Sister Hecla has to talk to him about business."

Hecla stood waiting for her cousin to approach. She was accustomed to exercising self-control when they met, as they were so often compelled to do since she had persuaded Wentworth to accept the trusteeship. She had bitterly reproached herself for her words on the evening after the funeral, which had caused the breaking down again of the barrier between them. She had resolved that henceforth she would treat him as though he were nothing more to her than the family lawyer. To school herself in this suppression of natural feelings she frequently summoned him to discuss business affairs with him, even when they were matters of small consequence, taking satisfaction in the mastery of herself which she thereby gained.

She awaited him now with many anxious thoughts. David's lease of the Works was about to expire and he had not yet made his settlement for the half-year. Wentworth had spoken of this to her, and aware of her brother's bitter resentment of Wentworth's appointment as trustee of her father's property, Hecla had said she would herself see Dave in regard to the payments due. David had given his plea for not meeting his obligations promptly that he had labored under heavy expenses in his management of the furnace. The chemical ovens and other innovations had taken capital and he had had difficulty, owing to the depressed times, in collecting money on the shipments of iron. The truth

was that Dave had negotiated a loan to make the first half-year's payment, which had fallen due just before Joshua Sandwith's death, fearing that any default in the matter of a settlement would further increase the strained relations in which he stood toward his step-father. The rejection of a number of shipments of metal for reasons similar to those which had caused the important Louisville order to be refused had greatly reduced the profits of the year's running; a good part of these profits Dave had been forced to use to pay off his notes. Hence his embarrassment in regard to his settlement with the estate.

Wentworth greeted his cousin with the words: "Well, Hecla, what is the result of your talk with David?"

"Dave says it will be difficult for him to make a full settlement until he gets money for the spring shipments," she answered. "It will only be a matter of a month or so."

"But, Hecla, if Dave should take the money due this summer to pay his April term, how is he going to meet the October payment? If he begins by being a month or so behind, it will soon be six months, then a year, and that in the end means ruin."

"Don't you think you are a little hard on Dave, Wentworth?" Hecla said with some feeling. "Remember it is his first year at the Works and you can't expect him to manage as well as father did. He has been under heavy expenses. There's been some new machinery at the rolling-mill to put in, he tells me, and he has had to make other improvements; you know, too, that he built the ovens for making chemical fuel."

"Why, Hecla, I am almost certain that Uncle Joshua himself paid for the new equipment," was the answer. "Indeed, I remember now he said so to me."

"That can not be, Wentworth," Hecla said indignantly. "Dave told me that it was he who paid for the changes!"

"Perhaps you misunderstood Dave," Wentworth said considerately. "And, after all, that's not the point. We must look at the matter practically. As trustees, it's our duty to think of the estate only; and in the eyes of the law Dave is no different from any other debtor."

Hecla knit her slim white hands together for a thoughtful moment. "Well, then, Wentworth, I had better advance Dave the money so he can make the settlement. Just for this first half-year!" she pleaded as she saw the look on his face.

"I think it very unwise, Hecla. It is a large sum of money, you know!"

"But it is only a loan and Dave says this summer will be very profitable, that the price of iron is going up. I think I ought to do that much for my brother, so don't oppose me. Wentworth, have you taken into consideration how handicapped poor Dave has been all along? Remember the way Uncle Gideon and Aunt Deborah talk about him. And Benjamin Truelove's 'message,' what could be more injurious to him than that has been! The whole connection believes now that Dave is destined to ruin his family. Even you, Wentworth, haven't the faith in him you ought to have! Richard Hallett is the only person who seems to sympathize

with my brother and understand what it means to have people think ill of you."

"Richard Hallett," Wentworth answered, "is the last person to let the world's opinion weigh with him. Hecla, you argue from a woman's sentimental standpoint. Dave ought to be—I don't say he is not—man enough to overcome public prejudice and not use it to excuse himself from meeting his obligations. If Uncle Joshua were alive Dave would have arranged somehow to make the settlement, of that I am persuaded. Of course, your money is your own and no one can prevent your doing what you wish with it, but, believe me, you will not do Dave a kindness by lending him such a sum."

"You're hard and unjust to my brother, Wentworth," Hecla answered. "You distrust him without cause and therefore you think I oughtn't to help him. It is only natural and right I should lend him the money."

As Wentworth rose to go she said to him: "I have invited Rhoda Markham to pay me a visit. I hope you'll come to see her."

"Why, yes, Hecla, I shall be very glad," he replied.

It was the first time she had asked him to call at the house except when it was necessary to talk to him about business. She was, apparently, studying a bunch of wood violets she had picked in the meadow with Jervis a little while before Wentworth's arrival. As she arranged them a few of the violets fell on the ground. He handed them to her, thinking how she had been wont in the old days to pick them for his buttonhole; for they were his favorite flower.

"Wentworth," she said after a moment, "Rhoda is such a lovely girl."

"Yes, I think her quite pretty."

"I don't mean that, Wentworth. I was speaking of her character. I found her, when we were together at school, always so frank and affectionate."

"Yes?" Wentworth said perfunctorily.

"Why don't you like her?"

"I do like her; I think her very bright and lively."

"She likes you, I know," she insisted.

"I am glad to hear it," he answered quietly; "but I must be going back to the office. Good-by, Hecla. You will let me know when Miss Markham arrives?"

"Good-by," she answered. She stood watching his alert figure cross the bridge; then with a slight intake of the breath she suddenly threw away the violets in her hand and wandered slowly to the little island arbor.

She was offended over what Wentworth had said about Dave, yet his words weighed heavily on her mind. Ever since she had been left in what was virtually the position of family guardian, she had pondered her many responsibilities. She had never spoken to any one of her father's letter in regard to Dave and the re-leasing of the furnace, yet she had thought constantly of it. It rested with her whether or not Dave should continue managing the Works. If he proved his inefficiency as iron-master then she must offer the management to Richard Hallett, as her father had charged her to do. She shrank from considering this alternative; her pride of family, her affection for Dave, both fought against the belief that it would ever be necessary to do so. She felt that her brother was handicapped by public opinion;

that he needed only a real chance to demonstrate his business ability. Not to give him that chance by re-leasing the Works to him would have seemed to her an act of harshest injustice.

Hecla had given much thought to Dave also in other respects. She had never approved of his living at Mrs. Littlepage's boarding-house, and after the death of her father she had asked him to make his home at Burnham. Dave had refused to do so on the ground that he wished to be near the Works. This had seemed a reasonable excuse, yet Hecla felt the refusal was partly due to his contentment with his present quarters. That he should be satisfied to live at a boarding-house with his clerks as his companions distressed her, for it seemed to justify Hetty Waln in her opinion constantly expressed that Dave was fond of "common people." For this reason Hecla had come to wish that Dave might marry some refined girl in his own rank of life, and she would have rejoiced to have him win her friend Rhoda Markham's hand. She had spoken of Rhoda to Wentworth that day partly because she frequently took occasion to impress him with the fact that she had for him only cousinly sentiments and therefore interested herself in his friendship for other girls. She had also spoken partly because she regarded Wentworth as possessing a claim to Rhoda, since his mother wished him to marry her. In asking her school friend to Burnham she planned to throw her in Dave's society, but she would have considered it ungenerous to Wentworth not to ask him to call at the house and thus give him an equal chance of paying attentions to her visitor if he felt inclined.

She was dwelling on the possibility of a marriage between her brother and Rhoda Markham when, chancing to look up, she saw Christy Pickle on her way to the house. Hecla considered Christy as an apparition of ill and she went to meet her caller with a sense of some foreboding. The old woman's first words, delivered with her wonted aggressiveness, were:

"I come to see ye 'bout Dave and Clover Littlepage."

"What can you have to say about my brother and Miss Littlepage?" Hecla asked surprisedly.

"Dave has to morry her, that's wot Ah hev to say. He promised her morriage, an' now he's given' her the go-by—an' the gal's heart is ben broke."

"What do you mean? My brother could never have asked such a girl as Clover Littlepage to be his wife. She has invented the story to injure him."

"Injure Dave! My Lord!" Christy ejaculated. "So it's Clover Littlepage that's a-injuren' yer brother, hey?" The shrill bitter mirthfulness into which she fell made Hecla shudder. "And all cuz she wuz fool enough to think he meant his word to her!"

"His word! I don't believe my brother ever made her a promise of marriage."

"If he didn't then he otter," was the old woman's grim retort, "fer he's played her dirty mean."

"How dare you speak so of my brother!" Hecla cried in quick indignation at this. "I shan't listen to such outrageous things against him!"

"Don't ye be high and mighty with me, Heckly Sandwith," Christy warned in her shrill tone. "They ain't lies, but God's own truth, I'm tellen' ye. An' ef ye

don't think so, go and see Clover. Mebbe ye'll believe yer own eyes!"

"Stop!" Hecla cried almost in physical sickness, hiding her eyes with her hands as if to shut out the picture so coarsely thrust upon her. Then she turned toward the house.

"Too fine to listen to me, air ye?" Christy sneered. "Afraid a the truth? If Joshua wuz alive, he'd listen fast enough an' lose no time neither righten' the wrong that's ben done!"

Hecla paused. In evoking Joshua Sandwith's sense of justice the old woman appealed also to Hecla's. She remembered the high esteem in which her father had always held Christy Pickle; she recalled his praise of her on their drive to the furnace the Sunday morning of its relighting. Commanding her indignation and dislike she turned at Christy's last remark and bade her finish what she had to say. When she had done she remarked hurriedly:

"I shall speak to my brother about this. If he has promised to marry Miss Littlepage, you may be sure he will do so."

When Christy Pickle had taken her leave, Hecla succumbed to the shock and humiliation of what she had heard. Too inexperienced in life to know what to believe, she was appalled at such a charge being brought against her brother and could only hope that it was false. She had never credited Hetty's hints and innuendoes regarding David's character, having long ago learned to discount much her cousin said; but Christy's accusations had the stamp of sincerity and made her fearful

that there might, alas! be some truth in the gossip about his low tastes. She felt degraded over having had to listen to Christy, bowed down with bitter disappointment that her own plans for her brother were so threatened—that instead of Dave's marrying Rhoda Markham, he seemed destined to wed one in a different class of life and with nothing to recommend her, she despairingly conjectured, except her trivial prettiness. As she thought of this and her pledge to Christy that she would see justice done, Hecla wrung her hands in anguish. Never had her sense of responsibility toward those she loved so borne her down in all the months that had passed since Mr. Sandwith's death.

The question of Dave's re-leasing the furnace seemed paltry compared with this trouble, this attaint on family honor and respectability. She wished her father were alive to counsel her, yet she rejoiced that he was dead, knowing how harshly he would have dealt with Dave if what Christy said proved true. She recognized that she must meet the emergency, much as her delicacy shrank from it; that she must summon all her fortitude and self-control.

The first thing was to see Dave, and ordering the carriage she drove out to the Works where she found him in the office.

"Dave," Hecla said, hanging on the hope of his denial, "is it true that you have asked Clover Littlepage to be your wife?"

Dave, seated opposite her, stared at her in surprise, his handsome self-assured countenance reddening.

"Well," he said angrily, "that's a pretty cool question

for you to ask! When did you become interested in Clover Littlepage?"

Hecla leaned forward and laid her hand entreatingly on her brother's arm. "Tell me, Dave, that it is not true!"

"What do you mean, coming out here with your tragedy airs?" he exclaimed, rudely shaking off her touch. "I'm growing tired of your interference with my affairs! The sooner you get it out of your head you're your brother's keeper the better it will be for both of us!" Then suspiciously: "Who's been talking to you—Clover?"

"No, I do not know her, Dave. It was Christy Pickle who spoke to me."

"Christy Pickle!" he exclaimed furiously. "Damn Christy Pickle! It's like her eternal meddling! I wish the old witch were—"

"Dave!" she pleaded in distress.

"A nice sister you are, I must say!" he went on sneeringly. "If you're going to believe everything people say against me—"

"I came to ask you if it were true, Dave," she interrupted nervously. "I didn't believe—I don't want to believe anything against you!"

"No, I haven't promised to marry her, if you must know! And what difference does it make if I did promise! Women are never satisfied until they get you into a scrape."

"I don't understand, Dave. If you didn't promise—?"

"Well, I may have said something or other to her,"

he replied carelessly. "The girl's a little fool. When women are in love with you, you have to talk as though you intend marrying them, whether you mean it or not."

Hecla looked at her brother. "Dave, Dave," she murmured. "Oh, Dave!" It was an almost unbelievable glimpse into her brother's character. "You admit, then, that you have wronged her!"

"It's like you to come out here and make a scene," he met her sullenly. "So you would like me to marry her, would you?"

"I want you to marry her if it is your duty, Dave. If what Christy Pickle says is true—" She stopped in shame for him, desperate over the unspeakable thing that bound Dave and the girl together.

He watched her with feelings of rage and discomfiture. He had an easy code of conduct and blamed Clover for her weakness in loving now that she had put him in an awkward position. It was not what he had done, but Hecla's way of taking it that made him ill-at-ease.

"I thought you were so particular about the people who came into the family," he sneered.

"I think I am more particular about those who are already in it," she returned proudly. Then, moved by her affection, she bent over and kissed his cheek. "Do not be offended with me, Dave," she entreated. "I have not come to reproach you. I—I do not know what a man's temptations are. I only want you to do your duty."

"I don't intend that you shall dictate my duty."

"You mean that you are not going to marry her?"

"Yes."

"But, Dave, you must! Don't you *see* you must? For

Clover's sake—for the sake of your own good name?"

"And how will you compel me?"

"Compel you? That ought not to be necessary!"

"Well, I tell you once for all, I'm my own master and I don't propose marrying Clover Littlepage, no matter what you say."

"Dave, she trusted you and you must keep your word!"

"I must? How can you make me? Perhaps," he retorted bitterly, "you and Wentworth think because father made you trustees you have the right to manage all my affairs!" Then ironically: "Are you going to refuse to hand over the legacy he left me?"

"My father left you the greater legacy of his name," she answered with a quick flush, "and it is my duty as his daughter to see that that name is not disgraced! Dave," she solemnly implored, "surely you'll do what your honor requires of you?"

"And if I don't?"

She sat mute and pale for a moment. Could she resort to such desperate means? Was she abusing her power? Yet she must save him, and there was no other way.

"I shall not sign the April lease," she said in resolute tones.

He laughed derisively. "And to whom will you lease the Works, may I ask?"

"I shall find some one."

"I suppose you're thinking of Wentworth."

"No, I do not mean Wentworth."

"Who then?"

She hesitated. "Richard Hallett."

Dave's contemptuous smile faded. "Hecla," he said uneasily, "you know you wouldn't do anything of the sort. You are trying to force me by threats."

"I am forcing you to do your duty, Dave."

"You've no right to refuse to sign the lease!"

"My father gave me the right."

"I understand. You want to marry the Englishman."

"You know that is not true."

"It is true."

"No! Mr. Hallett is nothing to me, Dave; I refused him many months ago. And that is not the question. It is your duty to marry Clover. Father would have wished it—he would have approved of my position. I will never sign a new lease unless you do what I ask—what I know I have the right to ask of you." She buried her face in her hands saying, "Dave, Dave!" heartbrokenly.

CHAPTER II

PEACE ABOVE ALL EARTHLY DIGNITIES

Robins, housed in the maples that lined the streets of Dunkirk, were singing through the May shower. The silver rays of rain slanted against Harmony's waterproof as she walked along the uneven pavements and splashing in small pools fluttered around her feet like myriad white moths.

Harmony had come into town obedient to a summons from her uncle, Gideon Sandwith. She had made request to be received as a member of the Society of Friends. Quarterly Meeting began the following First Day, and her Aunt Deborah had deemed the approaching session an appropriate time for her acceptance. Harmony had been spending the last few days in her room preparing for the solemn act, and it was reluctantly that she now came to Dunkirk. The message from her uncle surprised her; she could not guess why he wished to see her.

On reaching her uncle's house, Harmony found Hetty busily preparing for the arrival of Quarterly Meeting guests. Hetty prized cleanliness as a virtue exceeding godliness and had far greater fear of criticism on her housekeeping than because of Christian shortcomings. Having had the house swept from gar-

ret to cellar she was now on her knees running a hair-pin along the cracks of the wainscoting; for Hetty pursued dirt to its last hiding-place.

"Wipe thy feet well," she ordered, "and don't make puddles on the carpet with thy umbrella. I'm nearly distracted, Harmony! Guess what Uncle Gideon did last night while walking in his sleep! I put my cream pies on the cellar floor to cool and this morning I found the print of heels and toes on the whole half-dozen. I don't see why Uncle Gideon gets out of a comfortable bed to wander about the house in the dead of night, unless his conscience troubles him. He has thee on his mind at present. Thee ought to have seen how glum he looked when he heard thee was going to join Meeting! I suspect he thinks thee's pretending thee's convinced in hope of catching Benjamin True-love. He's coming by to-night's stage, and Aunt Deborah says he's still looking for a wife. He seems to have a hard time finding one." Hetty had never forgiven the young Quaker seer his neglect of her the night of the supper-party at Burnham. "Well," she added with a little laugh of relish, "Friend Truelove will see his prediction of trouble through Dave is coming true. How does thee like thy new sister-in-law, Harmony? I suppose Dave has suited his taste, but I can't see why one marries skim milk when one has had cream all one's life."

Harmony's eyes filled with tears at this cruel reference to her brother and his marriage, which had taken place a few days before. "Clover is a very sweet girl, Hetty," she answered. Then after a pause: "Are you not mistaken about Uncle Gideon?"

"Thee means about his not wanting thee to join Meeting? No, I'm not," Hetty returned positively. "And mark my words! There is something behind his scruples in regard to new members. He ought to be glad to have people join, considering how small the Meeting's grown. They say sleep-walkers always tell their secrets. I wish I had been one of my cream pies, and maybe I'd have heard the real reason! Well, that's done anyway," she sighed as she rose from her knees. "I warrant Friend Hannah Fisher can poke around the house and not find any dirt to talk about after she leaves. Now I must go bake more pies."

"Then I think I had better go into the parlor and wait for Unele Gideon. I feel a little tired."

"Thee always wants to sit in the best room like a visitor," Hetty complained as she grudgingly opened the parlor door. "Don't let the buttons of thy gloves scratch the furniture—it's just been rubbed—and if thee sees a moth be sure to slap at it."

Harmony sat in the darkened room with eyes closed wearily and an ache at her heart. What Hetty had said of her unele's objection to her joining Meeting awakened in her a new fear of spiritual unworthiness. Her bitter quarrel with her sister had destroyed her peace of mind for months, and she had been beset by moments of temptation when it seemed impossible to renounce earthly love. Had she finally achieved that renunciation? she asked herself. There were moments still, she knew, when memory stole into her heart like fragrance of rain-wet heliotrope through the barred window of a cell. At last she heard Gideon Sandwith's heavy tread.

Gideon was the youngest of the three Sandwith brothers. Ill health had increased the moroseness of his nature. On coming to central Pennsylvania he had invested in ore lands which supplied the needs of his brother Joshua's furnace and was accounted well off. Hetty accused her uncle of being niggardly and waited with some anxiety for the time to arrive when she might claim her fortune from her guardian's hands, fearing from the reluctant manner in which he doled her out her yearly income she might have some trouble in obtaining the principal. She discreetly hid her misgivings from her uncle; for it was understood Hetty Waln would inherit Gideon Sandwith's fortune.

Harmony was always ill-at-ease in Gideon Sandwith's society, and the interview was a painful ordeal. He broached at once the subject of her joining Meeting, and with every question he asked her concerning her convictions the delicate flower of her spirit seemed to fold more tightly its petals, and she spoke in a low, difficult voice, with eyes fixed on the carpet. At length there was silence, in which Gideon Sandwith sat with his hands clasped, his thumbs alternately lapping one another in the machine-like way familiar to her from watching him on the elders' bench. The litany of the steadily falling rain filled the room and the grayish light straining through the window-shades gave the homely snuff-colored face of the Quaker the hard expression of a graven image. There were no curves in Gideon Sandwith's countenance. Two lines running from the eyes to the corner of the mouth made a triangle. It seemed as if religion had stamped his solid visage with a hard geometric symbol of eternity.

"Well, Harmony," he admitted cautiously, in a grating voice, "thee seems acquainted with Friends' doctrine; but that is the letter of the law, and there is likewise the Spirit to consider. If thee is sincere in thy professions thee is willing, I presume, to discard the worldly attire thy stepfather permitted thee?"

"I never cared for gay clothes, uncle."

"But does thee intend to put on the plain dress?"

"Aunt Deborah did not speak of it," she faltered; "and I did not think it necessary to do so."

"Thy aunt has been too lax with thee," was the harsh answer. "If thee hesitates at this sacrifice of thy vanity thy religious feelings can not be deep. Thee had best wait until thee is truly prepared for the solemn act thee meditates."

Gideon Sandwith's eyes, hard as agate, gleamed with secret eagerness through their heavy lids, and he leaned forward as if to catch words of assent that fell in with some plan of his own. Harmony saw nothing of this and understood no motive behind his questionings. She sat in agitation, half-convinced by his words. Love of dress was not a weakness with her, but she had all a shy girl's dislike of attracting notice through so radical a change in her appearance. She knew her uncle had no right, according to the Discipline, to examine her or impose conditions on her entering Meeting, and for a moment she had the impulse to tell him so; but the mood was followed instantly by the feeling that his attitude after all was just.

"Thee may be right, uncle," she murmured, expressing this final thought, "and I shall think over what thee has said." And she rose, anxious to escape from

his presence. Gideon Sandwith accompanied her to the door.

"Consider carefully, Harmony," he insisted; "for this may mean thee has still a lurking love of the World and its ways."

She was hurrying by the home of Mrs. Seaborn Oliver when a rap on the window arrested her. She glanced up and saw her aunt's long face gazing dismally at her. A stately wave of the hand beckoned her indoors.

"Wentworth is absent from home on business, Harmony," she said in a voice so mournful that she began to weep at the sound of it, "and my niece hastens by the house without thought of me. If I should die I doubt whether Hecla and you would find time to pay your respects to my departing corpse."

"Would you like me to spend the night with you, Aunt Seaborn?" Harmony asked, repressing her longing for her own little room, which at that moment was like the shadow of a great rock.

Mrs. Oliver was too affected to speak, but she moved her sad brow in token that the proposal was grateful to her, and her niece as sadly took off her bonnet.

During the evening Mrs. Oliver gave Harmony no time to weigh her spiritual problem. It was the exaction of her society that conversation should be restricted to herself and her own emotions. She had the egotism of melancholy, which, like a willing weed, flourished under continual watering. Ready tears were proof to her that she possessed a temperament exquisitely strung. Not to be able to weep was inability to feel, and with the widowed lady feeling was everything.

She considered herself misunderstood by the world and frequently refused to see visitors, and afterward lamented her friends' neglect. Seldom did she leave her house except to attend church and Wednesday evening prayer meetings and funerals, in which she took a solemn sympathetic satisfaction. Her figure was like a moving sermon on its way to the house of worship reared by the Reformed Presbyterians of Dunkirk. She advanced with somber stateliness, her eyes fixed on the ground, her brass communion token slipped in the palm of her black-gloved hand that clasped a large volume of the Psalms of David.

Mrs. Oliver had new matter to mourn over. She could actually drown herself, she assured Harmony, in the tears she had shed over David's marriage. To think of the son of her poor dead sister bringing a common girl like Clover Littlepage into the family! It would never have happened had Mrs. Sandwith lived to dispense her refining influences; but what could one expect of David with a stepfather who boasted of his democratic tastes—who had no respect for blood! Wentworth was different. *Wentworth* would never forget what was due to their common Hamilton ancestry. She had long prayed that Wentworth might find a wife worthy of him and the mother that bore him. She had hoped he would marry Rhoda Markham; she had expected much would come of Rhoda's recent visit to Burnham. But Wentworth had shown himself strangely indifferent to Rhoda. It was the first time she had cause to complain of Wentworth's want of consideration for her and her loneliness. She desired Rhoda Markham for a daughter; she was sure she would be a comfort to her. There was

something wrong with Wentworth. He was reserved where once she had shared his inmost thoughts. She had to admit—with tears—that she no longer understood her son. He did not care for her any more. Nobody cared for her. The world had no pity: her nieces no heart. No, no, Harmony need not try to comfort her. She *would* weep; her tears *should* have their way—she always let them have their way! She was a disappointed mother—and she prayed that she might soon be taken!

Harmony went to bed exhausted with her aunt's lachrymose one-sided conversation. It was early dawn when she woke. Yielding to her desire to escape she left the house without seeing her aunt.

The streets of Dunkirk were still dim with the gray light that heralded approaching day, and the air, misty from the rain of the night before, wrapped the trees and gave mystery to familiar things. It was so early that window-shutters were still closed on the plain limestone houses of the town, and there was no sign of life save the sleepy twitter of birds nesting in the maples. As Harmony went slowly homeward something in the aspect of the May morning—its sweetness and stilled quality—made her think of the dawn on which the three Marys had visited the sepulcher of their Master; and the memory of the Gospel reading stirred her heart with pure aspirations.

It was with something akin to awe that she noticed coming toward her in the hazy half-light the figure of Benjamin Truelove. The gray cloth of his plain costume toning with the atmosphere made him from a distance part of the nature of the morning; and there

was something suggesting the apparitions of sleep in his deliberate advance. With hands clasped behind him and his calm youthful face bowed he came forward. They were now close to each other and he recognized her. Then without speaking, as if they were meeting on some high plane of spiritual comprehension, he clasped both her hands in his and looked into her eyes with a steadfast candor.

They stood thus earnestly regarding each other in the dim morning light, Harmony with her deep brown eyes lifted in timid sweetness to the preacher's face. She did not wonder how it chanced that Benjamin True-love had sought the hushed outer world at an hour so unusual. The meeting seemed indeed to be natural, even preordained. After a full minute of silence he spoke in the voice which was the golden gift of his ministry, saying: "I have a message for thee. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*" Then with a slow smile he gently loosed her hands and passed on, his head once more bowed.

Harmony continued her way, caught up into an atmosphere of serene joyfulness. The cross of the plain costume seemed all at once a trivial thing, of no weight for her shoulders to bear. Her fears and doubts melted as the thin mist around her dissolved in the growing light of the daytime.

As she reached the path that led from the highway across the fields to Burnham the round sun reddened over the green hills behind her, and the quickening effulgence shooting its rays along the landscape seemed also to brighten her inner world.

Heavy dew beaded the lush meadow-grass over which

her lengthened shadow flitted. At length her eye fell on this flickering silhouette of herself and then she noticed a wonder which transfixed her as the last most remarkable experience of the strange morning. About the head of the shadow was a soft silver radiance like an aureole. She paused to gaze, advanced a step: the silvery aureole followed, floating on the opal-strewn grass-blades. Again she stopped, her heart throbbing, a slight feeling of faintness come upon her. She feared to credit the miracle, yet a voice within her seemed to say the aureole symbolized the stored-up crown of life that Benjamin Truelove had promised her as reward of Christian faithfulness. Harmony had often been abroad at sunrise, but atmospheric conditions had perhaps never been such as to produce the phenomenon, or it may be her senses less quickened had failed to notice. She did not suppose it had ever happened to any one but herself; she was not aware that Benvenuto Cellini, the first recorded observer of the haloed human shadow, had written in his biography four hundred years before how Heaven had vouchsafed to him this same miracle. He had viewed his sanctification in complacent mood; but Harmony sank on her knees in the damp herbage and the silent prayer that stirred her lips was the Heaven-going incense of humility.

CHAPTER III

THIS TEMPEST WILL NOT GIVE ME LEAVE TO PONDER

Hecla and Hetty Waln were driving home after a round of country visits. It was an afternoon late in June and the golden landscape swam in the wavering heat. The dusty road, bound by stone walls, over which wild clematis clambered, cut rippling miles of wheat white for the scythe; and beyond these everywhere were outlines of blue mountains.

Hecla leaned back on the seat, indifferent to the drowsy beauty of the day, and Hetty, her eyes bright and restless as a chipmunk's, looked through the lowered window of the coach taking note of every object passed. Weary of combating her cousin's unresponsive mood, she had at last left her to her own thoughts.

Hecla's thoughts were far from happy ones. The last month had brought further worry and trouble to her. A quiet marriage between Dave and Clover Littlepage had taken place shortly after Hecla's conversation with her brother on that subject. Hecla had not regretted the painful attitude she had taken about the marriage: she was convinced that she had done right and that her father would have approved her action. But the humiliation of it—the hasty, almost clandestine wedding; Dunkirk's gossip and ill-natured insinu-

ations, family dissatisfaction—all this had been hard to bear, and Hecla had suffered the more because she had proudly concealed her feelings from others.

She had not only defended Dave, she had carried her loyalty and affection for her brother so far as to go to see his wife immediately after the wedding to ask her to make her home at Burnham. Clover had declined Hecla's offer. This was in great measure due to Hetty, who, curious to know the extent of Dave's folly, had insisted on making this first visit with Hecla, saying: "Well, I suppose as long as Clover Littlepage is in the family one might as well be polite." Hetty's idea of politeness had, however, manifested itself in such an unfortunate manner that Clover was highly offended. On arriving at Mrs. Littlepage's boarding-house where David and his wife were living, Hetty, while waiting for her new relative to enter the parlor, employed herself peeping into chimney closets and other nooks in hope of finding disorder. During the visit she had ostentatiously taken a seat directly in front of a hole in the carpet. Picking up an ornament from the table she had carefully dusted her gloves after replacing it. Finally she had capped her petty insults by commenting on the flies buzzing on the window-panes, saying demurely: "Thee knows Beelzebub is Lord of Flies and we ought to strive against the devil!" In response to Hecla's reproaches when they had left the house, Hetty had remarked defiantly: "Well, she ought to be taken down. Any one could see how set up she was over entering our family."

Hecla was thinking of the marriage between Dave and Clover as the coach rolled along. It had been the

only honorable thing for him to do, and yet what were the consequences of the marriage to be? Already stories were rife in Dunkirk of Dave's neglect of his wife and of his excessive drinking. Hecla refused to believe the former charge but she could not deny to herself that whenever she had seen her brother of late he had shown signs of being under the influence of liquor. She recalled how the sordid background of Mrs. Littlepage's boarding-house, now David's home, and where he came into intimate contact with his own clerks, had grated on her. She thought of Mrs. Littlepage herself, a good, colorless soul, weak-willed and inefficient. And Clover, pretty, affectionate, well-meaning, but how lacking in true qualities of wifely helpfulness! So this was what she had brought her brother to! Was it to be expected that he would ever rise and overcome his growing weaknesses with such a wife, such surroundings? She feared he never would. And once more came over her an oppressive sense of life's complexity: how after all even the most conscientious acts can be fruitful of ill; how often the fatality of circumstance seems to give the lie to principles of right and wrong.

The coach had reached the brow of a hill and Hetty suddenly interrupted her cousin's meditations by exclaiming:

"Hecla, there's Richard Hallett on the road ahead of us!"

Hecla sitting up adjusted her bonnet with a hasty hand; on seeing which Hetty tinkled the tea-bell of her laugh.

"I thought that would bring thee to life," she said

teasingly; and as the coach overtook the tall, heavy figure of the Englishman, she called out: "Won't thee ride the rest of the way with us?" And Hetty opened the coach-door invitingly.

Richard Hallett stood aside for the passing wheels and at the stop he, glancing over Hetty's shoulders, saw Hecla's face. "Thank you, I should be glad if it will not inconvenience you," he said. The tone included Hetty but the glance of inquiry was directed at Hecla. Hecla was too troubled and nerve-wrought to wish to talk to him. While out of courtesy she desired his acceptance of the invitation, she regretted the chance meeting.

Hetty's tongue rattled on in unison with the coach-wheels. She pretended not to notice Hecla's restraint. Any additional society was grateful to her, and in tormenting her cousin she revenged herself for the dullness of the drive.

Richard Hallett gave only perfunctory heed to what she said, and at the first pause he remarked to Hecla:

"I was sorry not to see you when I last called at Burnham."

"I was on a short visit to my married sister, Lucia," she answered.

"You have been well, I hope?"

"Yes, quite well, thank you."

Hallett, who had not seen her for weeks, thought she looked almost ill. Hetty divined the lover's unexpressed criticism and hastened to expose it.

"Hecla looks worn out, doesn't she, Mr. Hallett? She's a paragon of family devotion, thee knows. I tell her if sometimes she spared herself she'd spare her

family. Self-preservation is the first rule of life, *I* say!"

"It is a selfish rule, Miss Waln." Richard Hallett hardly attempted to conceal his dislike of the pretty chatterer in the drab dress.

"Hetty's trying to canonize me," Hecla answered, with dismissing lightness. Her devotion to brothers and sisters was a subject she cared least to discuss, as Hetty was aware.

"I don't know about that," was Hetty's retort. "If thee's a saint then thee finds thy Leghorn bonnet more becoming than thy aureole. I hope thy mining schemes come on well, Mr. Hallett. One hears such varied accounts; but Dunkirk always begrudges success. I suppose thee doesn't mind disagreeable remarks being made. By the way, has thee any knowledge of farming? Perhaps thee can tell me how they get rid of sneeze-weed in England. My cows have been eating it, and it spoils their milk. And isn't it true if thee twists a calf's tail thee will make its spine crooked? I caught the Flack children at it, Hecla, the last time I was at the farm. We must stop there to-day as we go by. Flack sent word the barn needs shingling and I want to talk to him about it. Thee doesn't know what is good for sneeze-weed, then, Mr. Hallett?" Hetty ended demurely.

"I never heard of the weed, Miss Waln."

Hecla saw that he was annoyed at her cousin's impertinence, and she said hastily:

"I think we had better not stop at the farm to-day, Hetty. Mr. Hallett is anxious, I know, to reach Dunkirk."

"I can easily spare the time, Miss Sandwith."

The Flack farm was where her mother died and Hecla seldom cared to visit it, and to-day it was particularly against her wish. Hetty promptly met the unuttered objection by saying: "I tell thee what thee might do while I am looking at the barn. Take Mr. Hallett to see Warrior's Rock. It ought to interest him; it's one of our natural wonders."

"I should like the walk, Miss Sandwith, if you are so disposed," Hallett said eagerly.

"I am sorry, but isn't it too warm for walking?" The tone was discouraging, and increasing sultriness made the excuse a valid one. Hecla thought Hetty had never been more vexing and inconsiderate.

"Thee knows thee's afraid the grass will stain thy new silk."

Hallett looked at Hecla's lavender-and-white striped gown with its angel sleeves and square-cut bosom, which showed under folds of Brussels lace the white neck encircled by a gold chain and locket. Hetty had been envious all that afternoon over her cousin's becoming array which contrasted so richly with her own plain costume.

"I did not think of that," the Englishman said apologetically.

Hecla resented his remark but she let it pass unchallenged. They had drawn up at the farm and Grace Anna, the farmer's wife, was seen hurrying across the paddock carrying a new-born lamb in her arms. She had on a sunbonnet like a hollyhock and under her linsey-woolsey skirt showed her bare feet "let out to pasture," as she would have put it. "Well now," she

ejaculated in a sing-song voice, "if you ain't a sight fer sore eyes, Miss Heckly! Hain't seen ye sence yer father died, hev I? 'T was appleplexy on the brain, so they tell me. My! what a grand funeral it was, with all the county rich an' poor folleren'. How's thet little brother a youn? Jest ez poorly? No wonder, w'en ye mind the heart-renderen' way he come into the light. I was thinken' about it w'en I took this new-born lamb away from its dead maw. Light and set a while, won't ye? Miss Hetty, my man has a bealt jaw on top a his brownchitis, but *you'll* want to do most of the talken', I guess!"

"Thank you, Grace Anna," Hecla said hastily, "but I am going to walk to the Rock. I think, after all," she added to Hallett, "I should rather do that than wait here." And she got out of the carriage anxious to escape the farmer's wife, who seldom saw her without dwelling on her mother's death.

The path to the Rock skirted a plowed field under the shadow of spreading apple-trees. Overhead the sky was a vast dome of pure azure, and the air bubbled caldron-like with the blithe notes of birds. Piled up on the horizon behind them, however, were masses of slate-colored clouds that quivered into golden seams. But neither Hecla nor Richard noticed the threat of storm. She was thinking of her mother thus rudely referred to, and Richard was happy in being unexpectedly alone with the woman he loved.

Walking the furrows was a solitary young figure in blue blouse and straw hat, with a "poke" thrown over one shoulder. It was Farmer Flack's "hireling," engaged in sowing sunflower seed to keep off fever from

the house. As he swung his arm they heard him singing the verse of an old farm ballad:

“And the years passed on as the years will do,
And the good old farmer di-ed;
He left to the lad the farm that he had
And his daughter for a bri-ide.”

As the cheerful young barytone voice reached them Hecla turned to her companion:

“Mr. Hallett, do you not feel sometimes all the happiness in the world is for the working-people?”

“No, I do not think that,” he smiled, yet respecting her mood, “for I too have my share to-day.”

They walked on, and the refrain followed them:

“For to plow and to sow,
To reap and to mow
And to be a farmer’s boy.”

A stile led into the next field where the path zig-zagged through deep sun-warmed herbage. Bees tugged at the pink nipples of clover; butterflies on thin wings of leaf-gold flitted from queen’s lace to clustering cowslip stalks; and meadow larks shot their little arrows of song into the air. They breathed the mingled sweetness wrung from the earth and it seemed natural to walk on in silence.

Hecla had thrown back her long veil, and she gazed around her with longing that the light and joy of nature might enter her heart. Richard caught a fleeting glance and answered its sad wistfulness with a look

that expressed his sympathy better than words. She knew that he loved her, and his long reserve on the subject of his feelings gave her a new kindliness toward him. Hecla's worry over Dave and his marriage had left her in a state of mind and body that found comfort in her lover's society. His strength, his positive character, did not antagonize her to-day; her old fear of him had departed.

Beyond the meadow was a shelving belt of woods through which they passed to Warrior's Rock, a rugged crag overlooking a sheer precipice of great depth.

Hecla had meant to remain only long enough to satisfy her companion's curiosity regarding the place, but the warmth had taxed her, and she yielded to Richard's ready suggestion that they seat themselves for a while.

For a few moments they gazed at the view without comment, she leaning against a wind-beaten dwarf cedar that rose like a flag-staff through a crevice in the rock, he seated at a respectful distance. Hecla was not a woman to be affected deeply by nature, but to-day she felt calmed and rested by the scene before her. Below, a stream made a broad silver curve around a swelling hill, and far away across timbered miles of broken landscape rose clustering mountain peaks behind which the sun was sinking in floods of light. Whirls of azure smoke from hidden farms dreamed in the tranquil air; and the only sounds that reached them from the leafy world far beneath were the noisy brawl of the stream and occasional tinkle of cow-bells.

After some moments of musing, Hecla, arousing herself out of her silent mood, asked her companion about

his work at Snow Shoe. He talked of this for some time, telling her of the rugged life he led, of the handicaps and difficulties that beset him, finally ending an account he endeavored to make interesting to her by saying: "Your cousin suggested that many people in Dunkirk have little faith in the success of my mining enterprise. The unfavorable opinion of the world doesn't discourage me. I have never failed so far in any aim of my life; and so I go on quietly with my present work, confident that Dunkirk will in time have to alter its judgments."

He had expressed his belief in himself in much the same language the day that he had proposed to Hecla, and it evoked a sudden uncomfortable memory which caused her to rise from her seat.

"Don't go," he begged, "I have wanted to see you alone like this;" and something in his tone made her tremble a little. "I was on my way to Burnham to call on you."

"I am sorry, Mr. Hallett," she murmured, "but it is growing late, and my cousin will be waiting for us."

He had offered her his hand to assist her in rising and the touch affected him so strongly that he faced her now with a look in his eyes which was an open declaration of his love. As she met his gaze it seemed to her he had said already the words she dreaded to hear; and turning from him hastily she began moving up the path. He did not at once follow, for he was struggling for self-control. His coming to Dunkirk that day had been a resolve born of weeks of longing and disturbing dreams, and the passion in him had only quieted during the walk to the Rock because Hecla

had surrounded herself with a reserve that seemed to forbid the mention of love. But their talk had dispelled this feeling and the touch of her hand had powerfully reawakened his emotion.

Hecla was already hidden by the trees as he started after her. He had gone but a step when a gust of wind broke through the woods, scattering the dried oak-leaves around his face like a flight of bats. He quickened his pace at the flash of lightning which followed. Seated with their backs toward the point from which the sudden storm had rolled up, they had not noticed the ominous twilight that was falling on the day.

Hecla had disappeared. Evidently she had taken alarm and was hurrying on in hope of reaching the farm-house before the storm broke. He saw at once that she could not accomplish this. A second long red lash of lightning, laid upon the backs of the fleeing clouds, drove them overhead and, as the roll of thunder died, rain stung the leaves like showering bullets. Hallett moved on through the darkened woods, and at the opening he saw a glimmering white figure clasping a tree-trunk for support, as the gale whipped the meadow-grass into leaping silver lines.

"Hecla," he called, unconsciously using her first name, as he approached. She did not hear, and her face blanched with a wild terror was concealed from him. Her soft dress strained against her bent knees and her long white veil partly detached fluttered behind her like a signal of distress.

"Hecla," he called again as he drew near. This time she caught the sound of his voice. As she turned her head he had a momentary glimpse of her pallor and

the strange dark look of her dilated eyes. Simultaneously a flash of lightning, like a three-rayed star, brightened the air and with a cry she ran to him and buried her face on his breast. A clap of thunder deadened their ears as if Heaven bore witness to the surrender of weakness to strength.

As he stood holding her to his heart the white veil writhing in the wind wound itself about his neck tying them together.

CHAPTER IV

THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

Hecla that night slept from utter exhaustion, but in the dark hour before dawn she started awake at the sound of a passing shower. She listened to the rain falling until the monotonous sound brought back the previous day's experience.

At first she recalled only the terror to which she had succumbed at sight of the menacing sky. Her presence of mind had deserted her at the first flash of lightning which burned the air as she gained the opening of the woods. She knew she had cowered there fighting fierce gusts of wind, dreading to advance or retreat. What followed was still vague, but she felt that something momentous lurked in the history of that half-hour. Having witnessed her mother's death from lightning she was abnormally fearful of thunderstorms. They seemed to her to personify all which ruinously concerned itself with her destiny. It was out of a lightning-seared heaven her young imagination had pictured fate leaning, looking with malign intention on the world.

Hecla's powers of reasoning were not highly developed, and the melancholy in her blood inclined her somewhat bitterly to the crude creed of the fatalist. To

her Providence seemed a power that hated the world and contrived against human happiness. The birth of little Jervis, which had cost her a mother, had always seemed one of those ironies of life by which it tries to palliate its injustices. With years of growing girlhood and the lessons they brought her, her conviction had increased that fate smiled only to conceal its subtle schemes against mortal hopes and plans. Life was a loom where a hand was ever ready to give a grim twist to the brightest threads.

As she lay with the darkness on her lids her mind groped for recollection. Then, with the energy that comes to those who wake in the night-time, she began piecing together all that had happened during the storm; how she had fainted and come to again in the farm-house whither Richard Hallett had borne her, the horror of awakening in the very room where her mother had died, and the drive back to Burnham with Hetty and Hallett. Her half-unconscious actions at the moment when the storm had broken and she had sought refuge in the Englishman's arms gradually took clear outline, like an etcher's plate over which acid is poured. The significance of it all came to her with suddenness—with alternate chill and burnings of shame. She felt Hallett's arms again about her putting her under that spell of his physical magnetism against which she had contended almost from their first meeting. In the desperation of her present revolt she sat up in bed clasping the bed-clothes with trembling hands.

She believed that she was compromised, henceforth committed to Richard Hallett, if he should enforce his purpose to make her his wife, as she felt sure he would

do. Strictness of behavior toward men had been part of her family tradition, and her father's constant cautions added their weight. This reserve she had rashly forfeited under the influence of physical fear. The outcome was inevitable—she had forged her fate.

Abhorrence of it gripped her there in the dark. She felt she hated this lover who had taken advantage of her distress, her blind emotions, who had not and never would understand her, who would feel it his duty to follow up what he was bound to regard as a confession of her love—that she had accepted him. He could claim her now as his right.

Then reaction of hope came. There was surely some escape! She did not see what it was, but she felt it must be somewhere. It could not be that she must marry against her will.

Yet if she must marry! There was at least this consolation that as Hallett's wife she would solve the problem of her relationship to Wentworth; erect for ever a barrier against his love.

Outside, far away, came like the horn of victorious strife the sound of a chanticleer greeting the slow-creeping dawn—dim bugle at the very outpost of ghostly light. Now it was echoed by other feathered sentinels. The solemn notes grew nearer until, a lusty fanfare, they rose from her own barnyard. Then the sounds passed on like a wave and died out in the darkened west. Another day was come and in dread of what it held she closed her eyes, resolved to forget in sleep.

When she woke it was amid the full light of day. She lay languidly a while, listening to the doves' constant

sobbing in the walnuts outside her casement, and there stole over her senses the dewy fragrance of a clear July morn. Molly Tucker, the old family servant, entered after a little, bringing her a tray of breakfast. She informed her that Christy Pickle had called the evening before, after Hecla had been put to bed. She had left no message, but had told Molly she had just come back from a visit to the farm and that Clover was not very well. The farm was the one Joshua Sandwith had left his stepson, and Dave had lately sent Clover there for needed change as her confinement approached.

"Was that all she said, Molly?" Hecla asked.

"That's all she said, but that weren't the only reason she come, I reckon," was the reply. "Noah, he was out at the Forge store, and he says he heerd the men talken' about some trouble between Mister Dave and Jerry Brown, and how Jerry had thrown up his job at the furnace."

Hecla asked no more questions and, dismissing Molly, quickly dressed herself. She was convinced that Christy Pickle had called at the house on some serious mission she did not wish to mention to Molly Tucker. That it concerned Clover she had no doubt, and she decided she would drive out at once to the farm. She paid little heed to Noah's gossip; the trouble between David and the founder did not impress her as a matter of any consequence.

The carriage had gone a short distance only when Christy Pickle was seen tramping along the road, evidently on her way to Burnham. Hecla stopped and bade the old woman take a seat beside her. "I am driving out to the farm," she said. "Tell me what has hap-

pened! Is Clover much worse? Or," she added a little bitterly, "have you some new complaint to make against my brother?"

"'Tain't me, it's Clover ez otta be doen' the complainen'," was Christy's grim retort. "They ain't seen hide ner hair a Dave outen' the farm fer three days, and the girl's worryen' herself sick. It's a shame, that's wot it is, the way Dave's neglecten' her! Ah thot w'en he morried he was goen' to settle down and behave hisself proper, but now Clover's in the state she's in he's runnen' with other girls agen. It's a blessen' she's got a mother that's flat on her back ez can't march out and tell her Dave's latest doen's. Ah warned Alpharetta Brown they'd be trouble if she let Dave fool around her, and now Jerry's got mad and swears he won't do another stroke a work at the furnace. Ah jest let him hev his way, fer it'll be a lesson to Dave."

"And why do you tell *me* all this?"

Hecla had listened mutely to Christy's tale, too exhausted mentally and physically to attempt her brother's defense.

"Why, so's ye'll lend a helpen' hand 'bout Clover. She's lonely out there without her mother—not that Matildy Littlepage 'd ever be wuth a hill a beans to any liven' soul. It's my belief Dave took Clover out to the farm so he'd be freer about his frolickens in town. It's drink that's the cause, barren' natural ornariness, of haff Dave's troubles. Ez Ah hev ben tellen' my Mog fer the last thirty years, it's rum ez is the ruin a young men an' to let it alone Saturday nights."

"Dave doesn't drink very much," Hecla faltered.

"Doesn't, hey?" Christy cried. "They ain't a day

passes but he takes his nip. Wot Ah fears he'll come home drunk one a these nights and skeer Clover and then Lord knows wot'll happen with her in her condition. She otten never to be left alone."

"You need have no fear; Clover will not be left alone. I shall see that she is properly looked after."

She said nothing more, but let Christy Pickle talk on in her raucous voice until they reached the farm.

The farm was remotely situated at the foot of a low mountain gap through which a trout stream ran tumbling in silvery cascades over boulders and mossy, blackened logs, as it worked its way down into the wide rolling valley. The stone-built farm-house was comfortably large, and one-half of it had been given up to Dave and Clover; service being provided by Barbara Hockenberry, the farmer's daughter.

They were met at the door by Barbara, who told them Clover was no better and was asking continually for her husband. On entering the living-room they found the young wife lying in a feverish state on a sofa. "Have you seen Dave?" was her first question.

"He is at the Works, Clover," Hecla answered. "Dave told me he had received an important order, and there is trouble with the founder, so probably he isn't able to leave. But don't worry, he'll be home this evening, I am sure."

"No, no," Clover cried hysterically, "he has deserted me! He doesn't love me any more!"

"Poor thing!" Christy said, trying to give a soothing tone to her harsh voice, "now don't you be fretten' thataway. Bed's the best place fer ye anyhow."

They put her to bed, and Hecla, as Clover continued

to grow worse, despatched one of the farm-boys for Doctor Proudfoot.

During the anxious hours of waiting for the doctor Hecla wandered down to the kitchen with the intention of preparing some delicacy for her sister-in-law. The kitchen showed the conscientious tidiness of the Pennsylvania-German maid, whose voice could be heard in the sunny garden cheerily singing one of Sauer's ancient hymns in dialect.

Hecla moved to the door and stood for a moment looking out on the spreading valley. The rich summer sunlight flooded the golden acres of grain dappled by the light breeze; the orchard drooped under the burden of its slowly ripening fruit; and from the daisy-dotted grass came the blithe whistle of quail.

Barbara Hockenberry made a bright note in the foreground. She was a big-bosomed blonde girl in a brown sunbonnet, green skirt and blue apron, and had inherited from her thrifty German ancestors inveterate cheerfulness and passion for toil. She was now on her knees in the kitchen garden picking peas. Barbara had a romantic attachment for what she called "wedgatable tings." She planted them according to "the book," as Baer's Almanac was usually termed. There were vegetables that must be planted in "the down-going" and vegetables that must be planted in "the up-going." Barbara's explanations regarding these mysterious influences were not very clear, but it seemed that they were connected with the signs of the Zodiac.

"Barbara," Hecla said, "have you been taking good care of Mrs. Sandwith?"

"Oh, yah, I dake goot care. Yacob, he vant me to

marry him put I says, chust you vait and ton't pother, I says. Missus hain't had her papy yet a'ready—that's vat I say to Yacob. Ten mebbe I vill, and mebbe I von't." Barbara made a hole in the brown soil with a red finger encircled by a brass ring. "Vat you sink?" she confessed with a blush. "Las' night I ate a salt cake an' I tremt a Yacob. Put ton't you go tell! I ton't guess I marry Yacob nohow. He sits in rocking-chairs an' I ton't like lazy folks."

Hecla was in the living-room a little later when she heard steps on the porch. She went hastily to the door thinking it the doctor. It proved however to be Bayletts, the old book-keeper at the Works.

"Christy here?" he demanded in his laconic style.

"Yes, Mr. Bayletts, she's with my sister. Do you wish me to call her?"

"Yes. Want to see her about Brown."

She looked at him inquiringly.

"Brown's quit. Furnace can't be run without him."

"Did my brother send you, Mr. Bayletts?"

"No, Dave had a fight with Archy McSwords. Gone off to the mountains. Want Christy to make Brown come back."

"But Christy can't leave my sister, who is very ill."

"No, Christy can't an' wot's more Christy won't neither," said the shrill voice of the person in question who, hearing conversation at the door, came down stairs. "Ye go about your business," she continued, addressing Bayletts, "an' don' ye bother me ez to Jerry Brown an' the furnace. W'en Dave acts decent I'll fix things straight at the Works, an' not befur!" And Christy returned to the sick chamber.

Bayletts shook his head. "Things pretty bad, Miss Heckly," he said. "Ah, if Joshua was alive! No trouble when he run the Works. He knew how to manage!"

When the old book-keeper departed, Hecla, heart-sick over what she had heard, mounted to Clover's room, where she endeavored to conceal her depression from her sister-in-law. Her brother in more trouble, and wandering in the mountains! What, alas, was to be the outcome of it all? she despairingly asked herself.

At length Doctor Proudfoot arrived. The farm-boy had found him asleep on his horse, which was quietly grazing by the wayside. In the old physician's hand was a worn copy of Ovid, with which he entertained himself on his long country rounds. Clover's condition he admitted to be serious. He gave her a sleeping draught, and warned Hecla and Christy to guard the invalid from any excitement, saying a shock might be productive of fatal consequences. As he left he took Hecla's hand and patted it sympathetically. "You don't look well," he said, "and you must promise me you'll try to rest to-night. If you aren't careful we'll have another patient on our hands." Then as he rode off: "I shall be out again early in the morning."

CHAPTER V

SOWED COCKLE, UNREAPED CORN

Bayletts' visit to the farm in search of Christy Pickle had been the result of the situation at the Works. Jerry Brown had thrown up his job as founder the day before on discovering Dave's relations with his daughter Alpharetta, while Archy McSwords on learning what had happened swore that he would kill the young iron-master the next time he saw him for meddling with his sweetheart.

It was Saturday morning, the day when the weekly allowance of beef was distributed among the hands. Before daybreak the beeves were killed and quartered and brought down to the cellar of the Forge store. Here the meat was cut up into smaller portions by the carpenter and assistants and placed in pigeon-holes lining the cellar walls; the cuts being covered up by the bones. When all was in readiness Joe, the jigger-boss, fired his rusty old flintlock to announce that the sale was to begin. The iron-workers crowding into the cellar had the liberty of hesitating over their choice of pigeon-holes, but handling the meat had the penalty attached expressed in rhyme by Joe as he limped about keeping watch over his customers:

"You can't buy land without stones;
And you can't buy beef without bones:
Touch and take!"

It was in the midst of this scene of barter that Archy McSwords had appeared in a tipsy state and tried to get possession of Joe's gun with which to shoot Dave when he arrived at the office. But Dave did not come, and it was finally reported that he had been seen drinking in the tap-room at the Red Lion, whereon Archy, armed with a cart-whip in lieu of the jigger-boss' flintlock, departed down the pike in the direction of Dunkirk, bawling his slogan of "Phil Hicks, the boiler, boom!" and cracking the ugly-looking weapon in his hand.

Half-way to town he espied Dave, and planting himself in his path he shouted to him to come on, adding: "And, by God, we'll see who's the better man this time!"

Dave was not slow to accept the challenge. He, like Archy, was far in liquor. Before he could reach his adversary the lash of the cart-whip whirled through the air and cut him across the face, raising a red welt. Maddened with pain, Dave dashed at the teamster, and the two, locked in each other's arms, rolled on the ground struggling like furious animals. Fortunately some workmen were at hand, and the two men were separated. Archy was led away with a broken wrist and Dave, his face bruised and bleeding, was taken to a neighboring cottage to bathe his wounds.

Though the fight had sobered Dave he was in no condition to present himself at the office. One of his charcoal teams was passing on its way to the mountains and, ashamed of being seen with the mark of Archy's whip on his face, Dave hailed the driver and getting into the wagon drove off with him as far as Custard's, a lonely

inn not far from the coalings. Here he spent the rest of the day drinking and playing cards with the mountaineers.

It was nightfall when he borrowed a horse and started back to his farm. His condition was lamentable, and remorse had awakened in him. He remembered his wife's critical state and how he had been absent from her now for three days. It was after midnight when he reached home. The farm-house was wrapped in silence, the only light coming from Clover's bed-chamber. As he was putting his horse up in the stall one of the farm-boys hearing him entered the stable. From him Dave learned what had taken place at the farm during the day: that Hecla and Christy were with his wife, and that Doctor Proudfoot had been summoned and had said Clover was very ill. Not wishing to face Hecla in his sorry state and seized with shame, he flung himself on a heap of straw near the fanning-mill.

Hecla had obeyed Doctor Proudfoot's injunction and gone to her bedroom. But she could not sleep. A sense of impending misfortune was heavy upon her. It was a warm, moonless night and through the open window floated the fragrance of honeysuckle vines climbing up the side of the house. It filled her chamber with appealing sweetness like an impalpable presence. Squirrels nesting in the garret overhead scampered to and fro in their play.

She lay with ears alert to catch sounds that would tell her of Dave's return, and as the hours passed and he did not arrive, her depression deepened. It was hardly more than a year since she had come back from Lititz,

and how much trouble and change the year held, what ineffaceable marks it had left on her life! The unhappiness caused by Wentworth's love had been followed by her father's death and grave family responsibilities. She thought of the gulf that divided Harmony and herself—a gulf that was still unbridged; of her brother's marriage and its sorrowful consequences. She had acted conscientiously in forcing her brother to marry Clover, but how bitter was the recompense!

As she pictured to herself the young wife lying ill through the last three nights, sleeplessly wondering over her husband's absence, she asked herself why her Aunt Scaborn and others should have criticized her resolve to remain single. Marriage! What broken dreams, what humiliations, what heart-aches the word represented! Why should she make the sacrifices love exacted—why tread the thorny path of wives? Her complication with Richard Hallett, the thought of which she had put aside during this trying day, broke over her like a submerging wave. What was to be the end of it? Was her future to be bound with his despite the fact that she did not love him, did not wish to be his wife?

She tossed restlessly on her bed. The honeysuckle made the chamber oversweet, breathing upon her like passionate human lips. She tried to banish the thought of Hallett from her mind and her heart filled with emotions she neither understood nor tried to analyze. At length she fell into troubled slumber. One arm, from which the sleeve of her night-dress had slipped back, lay curled across her face, and as she drifted into unconsciousness her lips pressed against the soft warm flesh. She was dreaming that she urged her horse

down the mountain road in the swimming green twilight under the leaning trees on her way home from Moshannon Hall. Now Wentworth reached her and his pleading words fell on her ear. But it was no longer her cousin, it was Richard Hallett who was by her side. She awoke with a start, fancying she heard Clover cry out in terror. She rose quickly from her bed and crossed the hall, listening anxiously at her sister-in-law's door-sill. No sound came from within and, satisfied Clover was still under the influence of the sleeping draught, she returned to her room.

It was not dawn yet and Hecla moved to the window looking out on the rear of the house.

A thin web of mist lay on the ground and in the high air dim white stars dotted the gloom. From the mountain pines a mournful sighing came and she could hear the stream that ran through the farm break into low drowsy music. She was turning away when she suddenly caught sight of a wandering red lantern gleam. She thought with a sigh of relief that it was Dave at last. The glimmer approached and she watched curiously. Then she saw that it was not Dave, but Barbara, and that she was running toward the house. Leaning out of the window she cried sharply: "What is the matter?"

"Mister's gone and kilt hisself in the barn."

Hecla felt a sudden singing in her ears and two dazzling disks swam before her eyes. She caught hold of the window-ledge for support. But the faintness left her as she remembered Clover, and instead of weakness came sudden self-control. Hastily putting on some clothes she slipped down the stairs into the kitchen,

where she found Barbara who, in excited gasps, told what she had seen in the barn when she had gone out to milk. Barbara, having related her story, flung herself on a chair and burst into hysterical weeping. Hecla went to her and taking her by the shoulder said in a stern undertone: "Control yourself."

The girl ceased crying, sobered by Hecla's manner.

"Come quickly," Hecla said, and they went hurriedly toward the barn in the darkness that still shrouded the landscape.

The barn was a huge structure such as Pennsylvania farmers take pride in building. Through a little door cut in a big one they entered the interior, hushed and full of the warm fragrance of hay. In the light of the lantern Barbara held for her Hecla saw her brother lying on the threshing floor, his head against the fanning mill.

Sickness at the sight of blood for a moment overcame Hecla, but rallying she knelt by Dave's side and felt his heart. It was still beating. Though he was not dead there was instant need of checking the blood which flowed from a gash in his bared arm. She found her handkerchief: it would not do, and she ripped off the flounce from her petticoat. With odd memory of half-noted things coming in crises of life, she recalled her father's treatment of cuts, and she desperately tried to make an effective tourniquet. Glancing around the floor strewn with corn-cobs, empty bags and pieces of old harness, her eye fell on the sickle with which Dave had tried to end his life. Ordering Barbara to knock off the handle of this she tightened the bandage around the bleeding arm.

"Take hold," she commanded. And together they carried the body through the dim pallor of breaking dawn to the house and laid it on the lounge in the living-room.

They were laboring to restore him, when Hecla heard Christy's voice. It brought back for a moment her sensation of faintness. If Clover should find out! She got on her feet unsteadily. "Do what you can until I come back," she said to the half-stupefied maid.

As she went quickly up the stairs she came face to face with Clover, who stood in her night-dress, her hair streaming, struggling to free herself from Christy's restraining hand. "What is the matter?" she cried. Before Hecla could answer she caught sight of the blood on Hecla's arms and dress.

"Dave!" she cried, "something has happened to Dave!"

"No, no," Hecla said in terror, "you mustn't go to Dave; you must go back to your bed!"

"Don't try to keep me from my husband," Clover wildly answered, and thrusting Hecla aside she ran down the stairs.

Hecla uttered a cry of despair as she saw Clover push open the door of the living-room.

During his sister's absence Dave had revived sufficiently to tear the bandage from his arm, and blood was again spurting from the cut. Clover hurried forward and fell on her knees by the lounge.

"O Dave, Dave!" she moaned, "how could you, how could you?"

But Dave had again fainted from loss of blood.

Christy took Clover away, and Hecla endeavored

once more to secure the tourniquet. As she was doing this she saw the protruding handle of an ax that stood edge-upward underneath the lounge and on her brother's fingers woolen strings were tied, while a pungent smell of burning salt came from the stove. During her absence Barbara had applied her own methods of stopping blood—methods learned from the wise women of Dutch Valley.

"Where have you been?" Hecla exclaimed to the girl when she reappeared.

"I vas down in the cellar," the reply was. "Mister he's goen' to tie an the mother in the winegar vill tie too if you ton't shake it an break the spell!"

Hecla looked at her mutely.

"Go to Mrs. Sandwith," she said at length.

Early in the morning Doctor Proudfoot arrived. He pronounced Dave's wound not dangerous; although he would have bled to death had Barbara not discovered him in the barn.

A little after midday Clover was delivered of a still-born son.

CHAPTER VI

LIKING DRIVEN TO THE NAME OF LOVE

Harmony came out next day to nurse Clover, and as Dave's wound gave no cause for further alarm Hecla felt she might safely return to Burnham in search of rest.

She found, on reaching home, a letter from Richard Hallett, expressing his hope that she had experienced no ill-effects from the thunderstorm. He had brought the letter the day after the occurrence at Warrior's Rock and had then learned of Hecla's visit to the farm.

To the letter Hecla wrote a brief reply in which she begged Hallett not to come to see her for some days. She felt that she could not yet meet him after all that had happened; could not in her present state of mind give him the answer she knew he would claim as a lover's right.

The horror of what she had lived through at the farm was like a heavy shadow on Hecla's heart and mind. Her thoughts dwelt sadly on the desolation and misery of Clover's married life; and the premature birth of the baby caused by the wretched wife's discovery of Dave's attempted suicide had powerfully re-awakened in Hecla her physical dread of wedlock. Recalling her conversation with her Aunt Seaborn

Oliver the day of the fateful supper-party, she asked herself why so many women could look upon and even welcome marriage as a necessary part of their lives. Marriage! Ah, what tragedies did it not cover, what heart-aches, humiliations, anguish! And she had involved herself in a situation where honor compelled her to yield her hand to Richard Hallett! She shivered as she reflected there was no escaping her destiny—destiny brought about by circumstances strangely connected with her mother's death. No, she could not yet receive Richard and listen to his words of love. She needed more time to compose herself, to gather strength for meeting the sacrifice she must make.

Hecla had now opportunity to ponder her own problem. Her mind was in some measure relieved in regard to Dave. She had left him sobered by the peril in which his conduct had thrown his wife, Clover; he felt keenly remorseful that his attempt to take his own life had been the cause of his son's death. Husband and wife appeared more reconciled than ever they had been in the months of their enforced marriage. Hecla could but hope that a turning-point in her brother's career had been reached; that, sobered by the trouble he had brought upon himself and those who loved him, he would be henceforth a better man morally and more faithful to his business. Hecla eagerly sought to believe in the sincerity of Dave's vows of reformation, not only because of her affection but also because her father's letter rested a sacred command on her conscience; and she could not yet even consider the idea of displacing David at the furnace by offering the management to Richard Hallett.

Fortunately Dave was spared further trouble respecting Jerry Brown and his post as founder. Christy Pickle had intervened between the young iron-master and his aggrieved employés. Having secured from the former his solemn promise that henceforth he would show himself less neglectful of his wife Clover, the old woman put on her black sunbonnet and, tramping off in Mog's boots to the Works, had an interview with the founder. The fruit of her mission was that Jerry returned to the furnace and Alpharetta to her home, from which she had been driven by her father on his discovery of her intimacy with Dave. Christy's high-handed efficiency accomplished this by employing her potent threat that when Jerry Brown came to die she would not lay him out—"no, neither him, Peggy, ner the ten galls neither." A similar menace had the effect of calming the belligerent spirit of Archy McSwords, who was still nursing his bruises and his wrongs as Alpharetta's sweetheart.

The events at the farm, as far as they were known, created a sensation in Dunkirk. Dave's attempted suicide happily did not become meat for public gossip, but his fight with his teamster and the reason of it was generally talked over, as was Clover's premature confinement. On many a Dunkirk door-sill were these matters duly discussed, and especially on the ample Dutch threshold of Mrs. Tathem's boarding-house. There they received the most judicial attention. No one was indeed more eager to acquire further news than Miss Pinkie Tathem, upon whose appetite the rumors had acted as olives affect a gourmet's palate. She was not on visiting terms with the Sandwith family,

but on some pretext of wishing to see Hecla she called the day after the latter's return from the farm.

She found Hecla sitting in the little island arbor.

"How are you to-day, Miss Hecla?" she began sweetly. "I am so glad to find you able to be up. I quite expected you would be prostrated by all I hear you have been through. But as I said to ma, now really *oughtn't* I to go out and leave our message of sympathy for *poor* Miss Hecla? Of course, reports are awfully exaggerated—they always are—but it *is* true, isn't it, that your brother was attacked by one of his teamsters and terribly hurt? Archy McSwords! The name sounds like battle, murder and sudden death, doesn't it? And he was a soldier in the Mexican War, too. I should think you'd want to tell *somebody* the *real* facts, so all these stories could be contradicted. People *do* talk so. As I often remark to ma, I wonder how the world *can* take such an interest in other people's affairs. *Poor* Mrs. David! What a surprise that marriage was!"

"Was it, indeed?"

"Yes. But there's another marriage soon to take place that'll surprise people, too. Of course *you* know whose?"

"No, I do not know," Hecla answered indifferently.

"Why, I mean Mr. Hallett's!"

"Mr. Hallett's?"

"Yes. Don't you know he's engaged to be married? You look surprised! I should think he'd have told *you*, of all persons. Perhaps I *oughtn't* to have mentioned it—it wasn't quite considerate of me. I had quite forgotten how attentive he used to be. Burnham

was the only place he visited when he first came to Dunkirk, wasn't it?"

"He came to see my father."

"One can believe that *now*,"—and Pinkie laughed maliciously. "But he certainly was devoted to your father, Miss Hecla!"

"Whom is he going to marry?" Hecla faintly asked. The news affected her curiously. She caught at it with inward eagerness, hoping it was true yet, oddly, she felt a sudden hostility toward Pinkie and the unknown girl.

"Rhoda Markham. The reason we never see him at Dunkirk is he spends all his spare time at Moshannon Hall."

"I think you must be mistaken, Miss Tathem."

"Oh, I *know* it's true. Mr. Donovan told me Mr. Markham told him the last time he held services at the Hall."

When finally Pinkie took her leave Hecla sat thoughtful in the arbor. While she felt that Richard Hallett would not have treated her as he had done the day of the storm if what Pinkie Tathem said was true, yet, she asked herself, might he not have been paying Rhoda Markham attentions in the months following her father's death when she had not seen him. She was surprised to find how much feeling the possibility of this awakened in her and it was with a warmer tide of shame she realized how her conduct during the storm had left her compromised.

Several days passed and Hecla rather unreasonably—for she had made the request of him—resented the

fact that Hallett delayed his visit. This sentiment increased as still another day passed and he did not come. When, however, he arrived the following morning, Hecla regretted his call and occupied herself some little time in her room before descending, seeking the while to compose herself. On reaching the parlors she discovered Little Pitcher there talking in his grave grown-up way with the visitor.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Hallett," she said as she greeted him. "I was doing up a parcel to send to my sister Harmony."

"Never mind, Sister Hecla," the child broke in. "Jervis has been entertaining Richard Hallett. He has been showing him his *History of England*."

"Yes," Hallett smiled. "I have been learning all about King Alfred and the cakes."

"And, sister, Richard Hallett has seen Queen Victoria! Would you like Jervis to read you the poem about *Old Susan*?" the child continued, addressing the Englishman.

"What is that, Jervis?" Hallett asked.

"Don't you know about that?" Little Pitcher exclaimed in solemn surprise. "Jervis will go and get his book." And he ran off in search of his favorite *Jane Taylor*.

When the child had gone it was with a kind of despair that Hecla listened to Richard Hallett's words of love.

"Hecla, is it so hard to feel kindly toward me?" he said at last, noticing her unresponsiveness; and he took her listless hand in his large strong clasp.

She murmured: "I am not myself to-day."

"I understand. You feel you need time to grow accustomed to my love."

She recovered her hand and sat up with returning spirit. "Yes, that is true," she answered. "I confess I am bewildered; I do not know what to say or think. I am not able yet to return your love. I respect you, admire your character, but you must give me time for more."

"You shall have all the time you wish."

"But," she said desperately, "is that not injustice to you? I may never learn to care more. How can you be satisfied with so little? Are you not making a mistake? I doubt that it will ever be in my power to respond to what you offer. My life has been so darkened and changed by the death of my father. I find it hard to do the things duty demands of me. And this that you ask—" Her voice failed her for a moment and when she spoke again it was with a defiant thrill. "Mr. Hallett, I can never love any one as I loved my father, he was everything to me." She knit her hands together and looked away from him, the tears springing.

"I honor your feelings," he said gently. "I do not ask more than you have to give me—at present. I am content to bide my time." Then, after a pause: "Hecla, I do not claim to know well a woman's heart. There is much in your nature that is still hidden from me. I only know I can make you happy. Just as I need you, you will learn to need me." And he added, expressing in his tones the sacredness of his emotions, "You are the first woman I have ever loved."

What he said, the tone in which he said it, touched her; but it was lost in her passion to escape.

"Is that true?" she cried. "Is it not what a man says always to a woman? I have heard—I have heard you love Rhoda Markham."

"I don't understand," he said gravely.

She did not look at him as she faltered: "It is the talk of Dunkirk."

"How can you believe such a story? You know it is not the truth."

"I do not know—how can I know?" she answered half-hysterically.

"And that is what has been distressing you?" he said tenderly, trying to take her hand.

"No, no," she implored. "Do not touch me. This is all a mistake. The other day I was excited by the storm. I am afraid of lightning, and I did not know what I did. Indeed, I do not love you, and I can never marry you." Covering her face with her hands she broke into nervous sobs.

When he had left her she sat up, impatiently dashing the tears from her cheeks. With the removal of his presence her spirit reasserted itself. Her old antagonism and physical distaste for him came back and filled her heart to breaking. She loathed herself for her tameness, her faltering tones, her tears.

As she sat there in the parlors her brother Jervis reëntered. The child's round noble-looking head dripped with water.

"What have you been doing?" she asked as she kissed him.

"Jervis has been called a curly-headed Jew," was the indignant reply.

Little Pitcher had gone to seek his book out in the

orchard, where he had dropped it on seeing Richard Hallett approaching the house, and there had met one of the farm-boys, who had teased him by repeating the old rhyme on curly heads. When he had told his tale, Hecla said wistfully:

"Listen to me, Jervis. You mayn't always have Sister Hecla to care for you. Dry your hair and make it as curly as you can, and then go out in the orchard and prove what a little man you are."

"Is that what Richard Hallett would do, Sister Hecla?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

Hecla, gazing at him, thought of her father's admiration for Hallett, and it impressed her that the child's instinctive affection seemed to echo her father's wisdom. Drawing Jervis close to her she asked meditatively:

"Do you like Richard Hallett?"

"Indeed, Jervis does!" Little Pitcher exclaimed enthusiastically. "Don't you, Sister Hecla?"

CHAPTER VII

HAPPINESS THROUGH ANOTHER MAN'S EYES

The meeting with Benjamin Truelove in the early dawn of that mystic May morning had brought peace and comfort to Harmony. She had left her Uncle Gideon's door the evening before in discouragement and doubt of her spiritual call. Then had come the meeting with the young Quaker evangelist, his message which seemed to Harmony to be indeed Heaven-sent, followed as it was by the aureoling of her shadow—vision of the crown promised Christian faithfulness. The effect of this had been lastingly to alter Harmony's whole nature. Having joined Meeting, and now willingly assuming the costume of the Quakers, Harmony was no longer content with closet piety. The happiness that was hers—light after darkness in her prayerful girlhood life—seemed to her selfish unless she shared it with others.

She realized she had thought too much of her own salvation, too little of her duty toward others. She had often prayed that the ill to fall upon the family roof predicted by Benjamin Truelove might be averted, but what had she ever done for those nearest her? She had forgiven Hecla, it was true, for the heartaches and suffering caused by her forgetfulness of Mr. Donovan's

letter, but she had never come close to her stepsister—not even in the lonely days following Joshua Sandwith's end. Hecla had pleaded her own renunciation of love the day of their quarrel—had she, Harmony, ever tried to soften her sister's grief, bring balm to this unknown yet half-guessed wound? And her brother David's marriage, his dissipation, his attempted suicide; the tragedy of Clover's motherhood! All this awakened in Harmony a sense of neglected obligation. Alas, she had been but sister in name to her brother! She had remembered him in her prayers, she had forgotten him in her life.

Such recognition of a new duty toward her fellow beings, of what the religious life truly signified, had come to her since that sunrise hour when she had fallen on her knees in the rain-wet meadows of her father's home and thanked Heaven for the pledge vouchsafed her in the miraculous shadow. So it was with thankfulness that she took up the task of ministering to the bodily ills and spiritual wants of her sister-in-law, Clover.

It was during one of her solemn night watches at Clover's bed-side that Harmony fell into a sleep and dreamed a dream. It seemed to her she was at home seated in the parlors, when one of grave and wondrous countenance entered and casting something weighty into her lap answered her amazed questioning with the words: "It is a soul in hell; yet touch it only with thy finger tips and it will live again." This dream troubled Harmony much until she deemed she had found an interpretation of its behest, when one day after she had returned to Burnham she was passing through the par-

lors and she saw over the fireplace the old steel engraving of the Quakeress, Elizabeth Fry, reading the Bible to the prisoners at Newgate. She therefore resolved to visit the Dunkirk jail.

The county jail stood on one of the prominent hills of the town and had a rugged fortress-like appearance that suggested security hardly borne out by fact. If prisoners did not oftener escape from this stronghold of rough-hewn mountain stone it was because they were inclined to regard it as a comfortable rent-free residence. Old Sheriff Waddles was noted for the indulgence with which he treated the offenders in his charge. These were for the most part confined for small transgressions, and the sheriff saw no reason why the tedium of the cell should not occasionally be relieved by granting prisoners the liberty of Dunkirk on their promise to return at nine o'clock at night, when a huge brass dinner-bell was rung at the jail entrance. Nothing so excited his choler however as tardy attention to the summons, and laggards were severely threatened with being locked out for the night if they did not mend their ways, or if it chanced to be springtime they forfeited the pleasure of joining their paternal sheriff on a Sunday fishing excursion.

A visit to the jail was a trial to one of Harmony's timid nature, and it was with nervous fingers she tied on the plain silk bonnet she was now accustomed to wearing and set forth for the first time on her mission, carrying in her hand a bundle of Quaker tracts. The sheriff received her with ill-disguised amusement, assuring her she would soon weary of her evangelical efforts. The first day she ventured only as far as the

grated entrance of the prisoners' ward and from there, gazing on the gathered faces that fixed her wonderingly, she spoke to them in a faltering sweet voice of her own sinfulness and the religious peace that had come to her. Then slipping the leaflets through the bars she departed with a little glow of happiness and relief. But she gained courage soon and, safe-guarded by the sheriff, grew accustomed to sitting in the midst of her rugged audience, to whom she read out of her little brown Bible of girlhood days, then, waiting with shut eyelids for the moving of the Spirit, she would offer up short touching prayers. Soon the prisoners began to look forward with interest that was not without its touch of sentiment for the soft-faced young Quaker girl, and the sheriff often abandoned afternoon strolls to be present during these readings.

One day in August Harmony, having been on one of her missions to the prisoners, was on her way to meet Hecla who had come in town to see Wentworth on business. As she descended Jail Hill she saw Mr. Donovan walking in her direction. He was about to pass with a dignified greeting when she stopped and held out her hand.

"Mr. Donovan," she said, and he saw her brown eyes fill with tears.

He took her hand with quick responsive feeling, and for a moment neither spoke. Then Harmony said in her quiet pure voice:

"There is something I have wanted to tell thee ever since I received thy letter."

It was the first time they had thus met face to face since their parting a year before at Pentecost Sand-

with's doorstep. He remembered the pretty Leghorn bonnet with its wreath of pink roses she had worn then, and as he now compared it with the one she had on it seemed to him that its gray hue symbolized the ashes of those roses and all they had stood for in his dreams.

"I fear," she continued, "that thee may have misjudged me about the letter. I should have written to thee, but it was part of a needed penance I should suffer thee to misunderstand me, perhaps think me hard and unforgiving. But," with a little effort, "I distrusted my strength, should I have seen thee then." Her voice grew brave once more as she added: "For I loved thee, John Donovan."

"And you refused me your love because of the quarrel?"

"No," she answered, "it was not that. I did not receive thy letter until it was too late for earthly love."

"Too late?"

"Yes, for I had offered my love as a sacrifice to God that He might give me peace."

"Harmony, you love me still. Tell me," he pleaded, "that you have not ceased to love me!"

She looked at him gently. "I have given all my love to God," she answered; and he saw the light of consecration in her eyes. "Thee must forget me, John. I would not be the cause of unhappiness to thee. We have our separate paths to tread. Fare thee well, dear friend! My prayers will be thine always."

Hecla on coming to town with Harmony had gone to Wentworth's office, which she found deserted. She gave a slight sigh of relief at the discovery. Her face,

colorless almost as the summer lawn she wore, had grown thin with a slightness that brought out more purely the delicate lines of cheek and chin. Under the broad brim of her straw hat her gray-blue eyes had a darkness due to the suffering and melancholy of the last few weeks. She had made the appointment with Wentworth because he wished to talk to her on business matters; but on her way from Burnham she had resolved she would take advantage of the meeting to let her cousin know of her engagement to Richard Hallett.

Hecla had finally told the Englishman that she would marry him. Jervis' enthusiasm for Richard Hallett, expressed the day after his second proposal, had been one of many influences which had caused her to put aside her own feelings—feelings that at times shadowed her heart with a nameless fear—in her sense of the benefit this marriage would be to those who had been left in her keeping. Joshua Sandwith's letter to his daughter had weighed painfully upon her responsibility. She recognized now, though with infinite reluctance, that she had not obeyed what would have been her father's wish in re-leasing the furnace to David.

That it was Wentworth's opinion her stepbrother was mismanaging her father's business she could not doubt. She knew that if she told him the contents of Joshua Sandwith's letter she had received on the night of the reading of the will he would firmly oppose the re-leasing of the Works to Dave next April, and try to induce Hallett to accept the position. To consent to this and by so doing disgrace Dave in the eyes of the world Hecla felt was impossible to her both from sisterly affection and family pride. She was persuaded

that Dave had been in a measure the victim of circumstances. Handicapped from the beginning by public disapprobation, his life and character had seriously been affected by the prophecy of Benjamin Truelove. It had led his father to lose confidence in him and thus refuse him a share in the Works which he had expected to inherit on the iron-master's death. Joshua Sandwith's letter had astonished Hecla and the conditions it had imposed had, despite the reverence in which she held her father's view of things, seemed to her harsh and unjust to David.

Hecla's faith in her brother had however been rudely shaken by the recent occurrences. She saw now how much foresight her father had shown when he had laid down the conditions of Dave's future management of his business. Attached as she was to her stepbrother's interests there was also her little Jervis' future to consider. She had been left the Works in order that she might hand it over to him in a prosperous condition on his coming of age. To lease the Works to any one outside the family—to Richard Hallett as her father had suggested—seemed to her almost a sacrilege. There was one solution of the difficulty. If she sacrificed herself by marrying Richard Hallett, he as her husband might appropriately, without exciting comment destructive of her stepbrother's standing, take charge of the furnace in joint management with Dave, and thus save the business from ruin through his energy and practical capabilities, in which her father had such trust. These family considerations, combining with Richard Hallett's kindness, his forbearance with her hesitation and coldness, the feeling of friendship

rather than emotional sentiment which characterized their relationship, blinded Hecla to the fact that she was marrying a man she did not really love.

She was, it was true, oppressed at times by scruples in regard to the marriage, but these Richard Hallett always overruled and his acceptance of the situation—growing out of his confidence that he would win her heart as he had her hand—seemed to protect her against the chilling thought she was doing him a wrong. His inexperience was his greatest strength—he never doubted; and this quieted the throb of her conscience, went far indeed toward justifying her in the belief she was giving him much rather than little—since it so satisfied him.

Hecla had not seen Wentworth since the accident to David—not since the eventful moment in her life when she had sought refuge in the Englishman's arms through fear of lightning, the day of her drive with Hetty. As she stood at the threshold of the inner office she sighed again with relief at not finding her cousin there. She was glad of the reprieve, for while wishing to break the news of her engagement to Richard Hallett she dreaded the ordeal. The offices were dim and cool in contrast with the glare of the golden summer day. Hecla moved around the room softly as though fearing to disturb the invisible presence that haunted it. She paused before the book-shelves with their rows of musty sheepskin volumes, letting her gloved fingers rest on several that looked most worn. Then her glance fell on the desk and, seating herself in the stiff leather-covered chair, she buried her face for a moment among the papers. A tear welling from the depth of her

physical fatigue fell blottingly on the "Whereas" of a carefully penned indenture. Hastily rising from the desk—for she heard Wentworth's step—she seated herself by the window and gazed out unseeingly on the empty Diamond.

Wentworth flung his green bag on the table with a gesture of relief.

"Forgive me for keeping you waiting, Hecla," he said. "I have just come from court where I have been arguing a land-suit. Have you been here long?"

"No, I have just come."

The colorless tone struck him. "You don't look well. It was a hot day for you to walk to town."

"Yes, the heat has rather tired me out," she admitted, "but otherwise I am quite well." Then, nervously, after a pause: "Wentworth, I have something to tell you. I have promised to be Mr. Hallett's wife. I thought I should like you to know before any one else. It must seem a little strange to you," she went on hurriedly, "when I have so often said I never intended to marry. But after all, Wentworth, it is the unexpected that happens in our lives—and I have given my promise to Mr. Hallett. You remember in what high respect father always held him." She suddenly ceased, then said desperately: "How warm it is!"

"I'll get you a glass of water."

At the composure of his voice she turned her face quickly with a pang of displeasure. She had expected she knew not what, yet somehow Wentworth's manner surprised and piqued her. He was filling the glass for her.

"You know all I would say, Hecla," were his quiet

words. "There is nothing I care for more than your happiness."

"Happiness?" she echoed with sudden bitterness. "What a stereotyped word you use! Do you think happiness the aim of life? To me life is only a matter of doing one's duty."

He handed the glass to her, saying courteously: "I'm afraid the water is not very cool."

She set it aside though her throat was parched. He had turned away and she sat staring out of the window, too wounded for a moment to speak. At last she demanded:

"Wentworth, why do you treat me like this?"

"You spoke of life being merely a matter of doing your duty," he replied slowly. "Why do you look on marriage as a duty? It seems to me that marriage except for love is not a duty, but a mistake."

"Why should you suppose I am making such a mistake?" she asked him proudly.

"I should not have presumed to think so, Hecla, except for your words."

"My words?"

"Yes, you spoke as if your marriage were in some way compulsory, not a question of happiness with you."

Color mounted to her cheeks and she retorted: "I thought you above the feelings that cause you to say that!"

He flushed also at the reflection, but he answered steadily:

"You know what I say is true, Hecla, and, feeling as you do, you are making a mistake in marrying."

"I am the best judge of my actions!"

"Not if you are marrying without love. You wrong yourself, and you wrong Richard Hallett."

"What right have you to speak so to me?"

"I have no right except that I care for you, Hecla."

"And therefore you would prevent me marrying at all," she answered him. Then, regretting her words: "Forgive me, Wentworth, for saying that. I did not mean it! I am so tired and troubled!"

"Hecla, won't you believe I speak for your good, to save you unhappiness?"

"Yes," she faltered, "I do believe it, Wentworth. But you are mistaken, I am not wronging Mr. Hallett. He knows my feelings toward him, and he is satisfied."

"Richard Hallett is not satisfied, Hecla! No man is satisfied with less than a woman's whole heart. He thinks he is satisfied because he loves you, and because he is confident he will win your love in the end. But suppose you never learn to love him, what then? The awakening will bring wretchedness to you both. Can't you see that?"

"Would you have me break my word?"

"He is a gentleman and he will release you!"

"I do not wish to be released," she cried. "Do you suppose I have acted blindly in this; that I have given my promise like a child without thinking? You can not dissuade me, because I have decided it is best for me to marry Mr. Hallett as my father urged me to do!"

"Ah, Hecla, that is just it. You are marrying for your father's sake, not for your own. You have an idea that this sacrifice is required of you. You do not know what you are doing! When you do know it will be too late!"

"Wentworth," she said, rising with a white face, "I can not discuss this with you any more. I am sorry the subject ever was mentioned. I should have known better than that!" She moved toward the door. Then she paused and looked at him, and Wentworth could see the misery in her eyes.

"Hecla," he said, catching her hand, "listen to me! Do not go! If you loved Richard Hallett I could not speak. But you do not love him. You love me—you know that you do! Didn't you admit it once? Do you suppose I can not see it, feel it? Have you forgotten that day in Jane Hamilton's parlor when you fainted—when you came to and confessed your love for me? You spoke the truth then! And now you will throw away your happiness and mine—give yourself to a man you don't care for—just because of your father's wishes! Tell me, which is worse, to marry your first cousin or make a loveless match?" And he tried to intercept her going.

"Open the door! Do not stop me, Wentworth!" she cried, her grasp on the knob. "Have you forgotten that I am pledged to Mr. Hallett? I did not think you would take advantage of our meeting to plead your own cause—to plead it at the expense of another!"

"You love me, Hecla!"

"I do not love you!"

"Look at me and say it—you can not!"

"Whatever I feel for you be sure of this," she cried, "I shall never marry you!"

"And why? Because of your father?"

"No! Neither that nor for any other reason of duty! Because I do not respect you! Because you are weak!

Ah, I know it now! I should have married you in spite of everything if you had been stronger than I! Whether I love Mr. Hallett or not, I can look up to him—believe in him as a man; and that is why I do not fear to marry him. But you—to try to dissuade me from marrying Mr. Hallett for your own purposes! Yes, I think I loved you once, but I love you no more!” And Hecla, struggling with her tears, made her way blindly out of Wentworth’s office.

Hecla and Harmony walked home together in silence. Each had read in the other’s face something that instinctively drew them near without need of words. As they approached the house Hecla said abruptly:

“Harmony, I have promised to be Mr. Hallett’s wife.”

“I am so glad.” Harmony kissed her sister. “May God bless thee and Richard!”

“But I thought perhaps you disapproved of him, like Aunt Deborah, because of his religious views.”

“I try to judge not that I may not be judged,” was the reply.

Hecla, as she looked at her sister’s sweet, patient face, remorsefully remembered their quarrel.

“Harmony, I think so often about the letter. Have you forgiven me for what I did?”

“For what you did not mean to do,” Harmony corrected. “I have forgiven thee long ago. Thee must not think of it again.”

“But you said I had ruined your life—taken away your religion!”

“It was wrong in me to say that!”

“So you are happy now?”

Harmony's eyes filled with tears. “God is very good,” she said. “He has given me peace.”

CHAPTER VIII

LOVE'S LANGUAGE BUT NOT LOVE

When Hecla's engagement to Richard Hallett was announced there was considerable dissatisfaction expressed in the family circle. Hecla's aunt, Deborah Sandwith, who felt it was her due that she should be consulted on all matrimonial questions in the Sandwith connection, considered that her niece's independent bestowal of her hand on the Englishman was a grave error. Since the supper-party she had had decided doubts as to the soundness of Hallett's religious views. Friend Deborah had of course wished to have Hecla marry in Meeting but the latter's worldly-mindedness and vain tastes had long ago caused her to despair of keeping her in the fold of the Sandwith faith; on the other hand she had hardly anticipated her niece's wedding one reputed to be a free-thinker.

She made judicious inquiries of Hecla as to Richard Hallett's history: what family he might have in England, and what were his expectations; for in all such matters Deborah Sandwith had a nice discriminating sense, nor was she without pride of blood and material prudence. That Hecla should have engaged herself to one of skeptical leanings, and without a comfortable fortune, seemed indeed to be inviting the ruin Benja-

min Truelove had predicted was to fall on her father's house.

Hetty, true to her early convictions that Richard Hallett had perhaps more urgent reasons for leaving England and settling at Dunkirk than appeared, sagely reiterated what a risk Hecla ran in marrying an uninvestigated suitor. Dave, who had long ago learned to hate Hallett, felt the alliance boded ill for his future advantages, but he endeavored to cloak his envy and ill-will from Hecla. Harmony alone was truly sympathetic. Her renunciation of earthly love had seemed only to increase her wish that others might find the happiness her own heart had forfeited.

That the tongues of Miss Pinkie Tathem and other news-gatherers on Dunkirk door-sills should have been well employed upon the occasion was to be expected. Just as the engagement of the Englishman and Hecla had been anticipated, so was the date of their wedding officially fixed by these diligent gossips and constantly Hecla was being asked: If it were true that she and Mr. Hallett were to be married at once? If they were going to England to visit Mr. Hallett's relatives? Whether she intended living at Snow Shoe or was Mr. Hallett to take up his abode at Burnham?

Such interested questions had the effect of making Hecla realize the inevitability of the marriage. Her father had taught her respect for a pledge given: it had been part of his own Quaker integrity, of the essence of family honor. In promising to be Richard Hallett's wife Hecla knew that she must wed him in the end; that no objection on the part of the family or worldly consideration could alter this fact. Yet she had been dis-

posed to think of it as something belonging to the future rather than to the present, and she was awakened to the futility of thus temporizing by the coercive character of these public demands. A long engagement was something almost unknown in Dunkirk, and was condemned as indelicate and ill-advised. Popular sentiment was thus like a hand thrusting her toward the altar. Then Richard Hallett, while he was considerate in many ways and was not unduly pressing on the subject of the marriage day, did not wish it to be deferred longer than necessary. So Hecla, knowing she was bound, at last reluctantly yielded to her lover's desire.

It was decided therefore that the wedding should take place in October and that after a short trip to Philadelphia they should return to Burnham, where they were to live until the hotel that was building at Snow Shoe was completed.

As the marriage day approached Hecla had little time for reflection. Life became a matter of the mantua-makers and their mandates. She did not look well; but there was propriety in that. The town crowding to the house to offer congratulations forgot to criticize Hecla's appearance in their curiosity over the nuptial preparations and gifts.

Hecla's married sister, Lucia Eaton, had come to Burnham, and had argued for a wedding to rival her own in gaiety and lavish expenditure; but Hecla met this by insisting on a quiet ceremony. Lucia therefore contented herself with seeing that her sister had at all events a bride's full equipment: accumulation of family linen, silver, household necessities, a fitting wardrobe. In all she was untiringly executive. Harmony

also in her own quiet way performed many devoted services. Discontented though he was with Hecla's choice, Dave, when it came to the question of the nuptials, considered it his duty to see that the festivities lacked no element of success, and he secretly determined that the carousing usual on such occasions should not be neglected.

The arrival of the great Conestoga wagons which brought the wedding finery from Philadelphia put Hetty Waln in a fever pitch of excitement. It was her eager fingers that tore open the ravishing bundles and bandboxes and on her plump small person that the gowns and mantles were tried to judge of their effect. Hecla's indifference provoked her into saying one day:

"With Richard Hallett so hale and healthy looking, Hecla, thee can't look forward to being a bride a second time; so if I were thee I'd take more pleasure in my wedding things. Thee is only pretending thee doesn't care about them. Thee always did love to appear so superior!"

"Somehow I don't care about clothes as much as I used to, Hetty."

"Well, then, if I felt that way I shouldn't have spent so much money on them," Hetty returned with a censorious air. "I must say thee hasn't been very economical, considering the great panic and the furnace shut down. Uncle Gideon thinks all this trouble much more serious than thy brother thinks it. Dave is always so sanguine. He owes Uncle Gideon a lot of money for ore and thee may be sure he'll make him pay!"

"Uncle Gideon need not worry over that, Hetty," Hecla answered quickly. "David is perfectly honorable

and would beggar himself rather than not pay his debts. The furnace after all is only closed down until the price of iron is high enough to make manufacturing it worth while. As to what you call my extravagance, Lucia is responsible for that."

"Well, as long as thee has thy finery I'd enjoy it. I must say the bridal veil quite becomes me," she admitted, thoughtfully gazing at herself in the mirror. "Let me have it again," taking the wreath of orange blossoms from Hecla's hand. "It rather makes me want to marry in spite of husbands being such a nuisance. I suppose we marry the men we most hate. I have no patience with Blair Nandine, he's such a fool, but I'd accept him, I think, if it weren't for Uncle Gideon. Of course," she impatiently sighed, "he'd disinherit me if I married anybody but a Friend. It's no use considering how I look in a veil if I have to stand up in Meeting and 'take' a husband without bridesmaids, music or flowers or anything that really counts. Thank goodness, I have only another year to wait to be my own mistress; and then perhaps I'll astonish people. Hecla," she continued solemnly, "the longer I live the more bitter I grow over Uncle Gideon's making me wear this hideous costume. If I were only allowed just *one* ruffle on my skirt! I would make it *big* and edge it with lace. Thee's so fortunate, Hecla!"

"Am I, Hetty?" Hecla answered as she put the veil back into the box. "I don't always think so."

It was frequently the custom among the Quakers of central Pennsylvania when they wedded 'out of Meeting' to compromise religious differences by having a

civil marriage performed by the squire at the bride's home. This arrangement was made in Hecla's case. Richard Hallett had suggested that the ceremony be performed by Mr. Donovan, and he had been surprised by the manner in which Hecla had refused to listen to him.

"I did not know, Hecla," he had said, "that you were so prejudiced as to object to an Episcopal clergyman. Mr. Donovan is a fine fellow. He has done such excellent mission work at Snow Shoe."

"It is Mr. Donovan I object to," she had replied. "Have you forgotten, Richard, that he insulted my father?"

The wedding was in the early forenoon. Some relatives and friends from a distance came to attend it: these and the family's Dunkirk connections and Hecla's few girl intimates made up the guests—not a great number in all. The squire, a courtly old gentleman and cousin of Hecla's mother, elaborated the simple civil form and ended by making a short, carefully-worded speech. Then followed the general well-wishing. Mrs. Seaborn Oliver, dropping splendid jewels of sorrow, murmured sonorously that she had always prayed her niece might find a husband. Her aunt Deborah Sandwith, still a little reserved with Hecla because she had not been consulted about the engagement, gave her a kiss on the cheek, saying: "I wish thee, dear, all the happiness that is good for thee." When Hetty came up she whispered: "I am to be congratulated, too, Hecla. Blair Nandine was so affected seeing thee married he slipped a ring on my third finger while the service was going on, and I decided it might

as well stay. After all, I can worry along without Uncle Gideon's money!"

But Hecla scarcely heard the felicitations. She had caught sight of Wentworth courteously standing aside for the feminine stream to flow onward, and she was waiting for him—the only person whose good wishes had meaning for her. As he held out his hand she looked at him mutely with a certain sad triumph in her eyes. She had placed a barrier between them now for ever.

"Why doesn't thee claim thy privilege, Wentworth?" Hetty cried mockingly. The red mounted to Wentworth's temples and, bending, he lightly kissed his cousin's hand. Richard Hallett standing beside Hecla, his eyes full of pride, smiled upon them. "My wife," he said tenderly, as she turned again to him.

Owing to the rudeness of stage travel it was the custom for wedding parties to drive from Dunkirk in private vehicles across the mountains—a day's trip—to a small town on the Susquehanna River which was the nearest railroad connection. A roadside tavern served as a midday stop and the inn at the journey's end provided supper and lodging; the bridal pair usually starting next morning on their honeymoon. This arrangement was adopted on Hecla's marriage. Dave had ordered a venison supper to await them at the inn, which was reached toward the close of a brown October day. Everybody was hungry and gaiety seasoned the goodly haunch of venison of fine size and savor that hung in primitive fashion in the fireplace.

After supper, when the dining-room floor was cleared, there was general exclamation. Wax had not yet taken the place of chalk for dancing purposes. A local artist

had exercised his rude skill in drawing a design worthy the distinguished nuptials. This represented a heroic-sized bride and groom surrounded by Cupids holding garlands, and turtle doves billing in pairs, while over all hovered the winged form of Fortune inverting her cornucopia—a masterpiece in many-colored chalks.

“What a pity to have it all rubbed out!” Hetty exclaimed as she stood by Richard Hallett in the rôle of youthful philosopher surveying the follies of others. Dave had selected Mr. Blair Nandine for master of ceremonies, and when the fiddlers struck up a blithe local tune he had opened the ball with Hecla as his partner. Hallett did not dance and he had not expected his wife would do so. He was not only surprised at the readiness with which she accepted the invitation of Dunkirk’s Beau Brummel, but at the high spirits which had been hers all the day. It was with a slight sense of isolation that, from a quiet corner of the room, he watched her make her graceful way through the rippling ranks of the *Tempête*, and he reflected that after all he did not wholly understand her. Yet if marriage had already done so much to transform her, bring back youthful animation, could he be other than content? No doubt, it was a passing mood—this half-feverish abandonment to the night’s gaiety, and she would on the morrow again show herself the calm, dignified woman he had known. As he watched, he grew impatient for the end of these ball-room distractions. His heart was full of his human want; he longed for the hour when they would at last be left together, to their private happiness.

Hetty’s words had passed unheeded, and the little Quakeress now began demurely to remark on Hecla’s

levities. Her efforts to draw from Richard Hallett some foreshadowings of marital rule that she might triumphantly repeat them to her cousin resulted only in the Englishman's saying, "I do not criticize my wife to others, Miss Waln."

"I hope Hecla will lead him a dance as gay as this for the rest of his life," Hetty murmured to herself.

Gideon Sandwith's ward was in a bitter mood as she stood watching the fascinating pigeons, the graceful bends and bows of the other guests. Never had she so chafed under the restrictions of her life; never so hated the drab garb that marked her as one apart from these youthful disportings. People called her ill-natured. Well, and no wonder that she was, with such a blight on her maidenhood. A passion to defy her Uncle Gideon and join the others in the frolic measures of Sir Roger de Coverley took possession of her. She knew her guardian would never forgive her if she did and that his will in her favor could be destroyed at a stroke of the pen. But was the inheritance worth the sacrifices she must make to gain it? She saw Blair Nandine in all the elegance of broadcloth and frilled cambric approaching.

"What a pity you don't dance, Hetty!" he said to her.

"Ask me and see if I don't," she challenged recklessly.

And the next moment there was a shout of surprise and a general applauding of hands as Miss Hetty Waln joined the throng on the floor.

"I suppose some one'll tell Uncle Gideon," she reflected. "People are so mean. But let them—I don't care!"

The hour was growing late. Under the tripping feet

of the dancers the chalk design had become a blur. The garlands were broken, the smiles of the Cupids had changed into ironic grimaces and Fortune had lost her cornucopia. Bride and bridesmaids had slipped away, and guests living in the neighborhood were leaving the inn. Dave had seen there was no lack of liquor to cheer the spirits of the men, and most of them—less Hecla's friends than his own—were gathered in the bar-room drinking final healths to the bridal pair.

A stage of reckless jollity had been reached by these and it expressed itself in impatient demands for Richard Hallett. The groom in their opinion had not shown the good fellowship the occasion called for. He had been reserved; he had refused to join them in the bar-room during the evening; and this had not increased his popularity. Some commented on what they called his Englishman's conceit, his air of holding himself above the amusements and manners of Dunkirk society. Some of Hecla's cousins, who had come from the city to attend the wedding, expressed surprise at the choice of husband she had made—she who might have had any one of themselves had she wished. There was some fear that the groom meditated eluding the old custom of the county, dating back to rough pioneer days, of being formally conducted to his bedroom and there disarrayed for the night. Excited by the draining of many glasses, the company swore they were not going to forfeit this privilege. A general cheer greeted Dave's return with Richard Hallett.

Richard Hallett accepted the glass that was offered him, but he merely tasted it and, setting it down, expressed his appreciation of their civilities, after which

he wished them good night. There was noisy protest at this. He must linger a while at least and warm the cockles of his heart. But he was quietly determined and shaking their hands, left the bar-room.

He was surprised as he mounted the stairs to find the young men crowding after him. On reaching his room adjoining the bridal chamber he turned and again bade the company good night.

Some bursts of ill-bred laughter greeted this, and one of the guests of the evening said to him: "We don't let grooms off so easy, Hallett; we are going to see you to bed."

"You must excuse me, gentlemen."

"Oh, see here, Hallett," answered one perhaps drunker than the others, "it's our custom. You wouldn't be half-married if we didn't get you ready for bed; it's part of the program." Slyly urged forward by others he laid his hand on the groom's coat.

"Take your hand away," Richard Hallett said quietly. As the young fellow did not relinquish his hold he thrust him back with force into the arms of his companions.

Wentworth now begged Dave to interfere. He had reluctantly followed the others up stairs fearing some such misadventure.

"He's a fool, Wentworth," was the answer, "and I am not going to offend all these good fellows. The wedding hasn't been much of a success anyhow."

As Richard Hallett stood sternly facing the disconcerted young men the door into the next room was opened and Hetty's face peeped out. "Why, Cousin Richard," she cried mockingly, "what can be the matter?"

At the sound of her voice the others awkwardly retreated and Richard and Hetty could hear the shout of merriment at Wentworth's resourceful proposal that they go down to the bar-room for one more drink.

"What is the matter?" Hetty propounded the question with a pert little grimace. "It looks, I should say, as if thee had been having a quarrel. Anyhow, it sounded to us like a drunken brawl. If thee's not careful Hecla will want me to stay with her." And Hetty gave a teasing little laugh, clapped the door to, and Richard heard the key turn in the lock.

Amazed, angered at Hetty's impertinence, he stood motionless where she had left him. Then, in a moment, he laid his hand on the door-knob and said quietly: "Hecla!"

There was no answer, and he rapped lightly, saying again: "Hecla." And after a pause: "I wish to speak to you."

Still there was no reply and as Hallett waited slowly his face whitened. He listened, but he could hear no voices. He tried the door and finding it still bolted stood irresolute. Then he caught up his hat and cloak from the chair where he had flung them and left the room.

He went down stairs. The bar-room door was ajar and as he passed a roar of laughter greeted his ears. Some one had just finished telling a good story, but Richard Hallett mistaking its cause stopped abruptly. Then, realizing his position, he went on, his hands shut in anger, his face livid. The inn door closed with a heavy sound as he went out into the night where so often we carry our problems and sorrows.

A few yards away the road in front of the inn turned, skirting the inn garden. Hallett followed this and as he walked along under the chill incurious stars piercing the sad autumnal night he sought to find a reason for Hecla's surprising conduct. He did not credit Hetty's pert insinuation that Hecla had been alarmed over the slight altercation which had taken place between himself and Dave's friends. Hetty's mocking manner, as she coolly shut and locked the door in his face, was an insult for which he could not believe his wife in any way responsible. But why had Hecla not answered him? Why had she not opened the door at his demand? During the evening she had appeared in unusually high spirits, and if she were ill it would have been natural for her cousin to say so. What, then, could be the cause of her strange behavior? Something told him that it was no caprice on Hecla's part; and for a while he wondered if blight was destined to fall on his dream of happiness; if in his wife's melancholy eyes was to be read the ruin of his hopes. The dearth of the misty night around him, the vague pathos of the dying year, made its way into his heart as he walked on.

He was passing now by a little gate that opened into the inn yard opposite where a flight of steps led from the ground to a large second-story porch running the length of the house. He thought he heard his name called; and looking up he saw a shadowy figure leaning over the porch railing. At once he pushed open the gate into the yard and recognized Hetty as she ran down the steps to meet him.

"O Mr. Hallett," she cried, "has thee seen Hecla?"

"What do you mean?"

"She was not in her room when I went back after speaking to thee. I'm worried about her—I fear something's wrong."

"Why should you fear that?" he demanded quickly.

"She seemed so unlike herself. She left me to walk up and down the porch, she said. Instead she must have left the inn."

"Go back to the house and do not speak of this to any one," Hallett hurriedly directed. "I shall look for her."

The inn garden ran sloping for some hundred yards down to the river. Hallett felt sure that if Hecla had left the inn this was the direction she had taken. Indeed any other way would have brought her on to the high-road or around by the kitchen where there would have been the chance of encountering the servants. So with hasty pace he followed the path that led through an apple orchard and past an old cider-press, a stable and outhouses. The moon had gone down, but the sky was filled with stars, so objects were half discernible through the filming mist of the damp autumn night. As Hallett approached the river the mist grew thicker. Now he could hear the lapping of the water on the shore. Dread took him as he hurried on. He remembered Dave's attempted suicide, Hecla's strange, almost tragic, look; and the abnormally grave unchildlike ways of little Jervis. Could Hecla's unnatural animation during the evening have been followed by reactive depression that had impelled her to some desperate act?

He was close to the river now and the mist only permitted seeing a few yards ahead with any distinctness.

His ear caught the slap of water against the side of a boat. Peering into the mist from the wharf on which he stood he made out a shadowy figure that he recognized as his wife.

"Hecla," he called out, "what are you doing? Why are you there?"

He could hear her utter a cry of terror. Then there was the sound of hasty fumbling at a chain attaching the boat to the wharf, and before he understood its significance the chain slipped with a splash into the river and the boat, released, began drifting out from the shore.

"Hecla, are you mad?" he called again, wading into the water. Muffled in a shawl, she crouched in the stern of the boat, and her eyes were fixed on him alertly. She had drawn an oar to her and was trying without knowledge to use it.

"No, no," she implored as he waded toward her and caught hold of the boat, "no, no, do not compel me! Have pity, Richard! Oh, will nobody save me! Richard! I can not! I can not!"

Hallett's hand rested on the edge of the boat, steadying it. The water was up to his waist. "Hecla! My poor girl!" he said compassionately, "what possesses you to act in this way? What has alarmed you so?"

She was shivering violently and her breath came in sharp dry gasps. She still thrust desperately in the water with the oar.

"Ah, do not compel me," she prayed. "Have pity, Richard!"

He said soothingly: "Do not be frightened. Nobody is going to hurt you!"

She continued to shiver as with ague, crouching at the extreme end of the boat, where he could not touch her. He could see how suspiciously she watched him, how wild her face was.

He waited a moment, then said to her quietly: "Hecla, you will catch cold out here in the mist. Come back to the house with me!"

At that she seemed to have fresh access of terror. "No, no, do not compel me to go back. Ah, how cruel you are, how cruel!"

"Why are you afraid of me, Hecla?" he said as one persuades a child. "I shall not hurt you. I only wish you to come back to the inn. You will come?"

"No, let me stay, let me stay! Do not make me go!"

"But that is impossible, you can't stay all night here in the boat."

Her face fell despairingly in her hands. "Ah, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Hecla, were you frightened at the noise outside your door? Did you think I had been drinking? Is that it?"

"No," she breathed.

"Why are you afraid of me then? Why did you wish to leave me? How have I offended you?"

"Forgive me, Richard!"

"What is there to forgive?" he asked gently.

"Oh, why did you ask me to marry you? I did not know what it all meant—I did not know!"

He considered her words as she sat there, her face hidden from him, her breast rising and falling. Then memory of his conversation with Wentworth Oliver about Hecla came back to him. He began to divine the cause of her flight and terror.

“Hecla,” he said gravely after a little, “can you not trust me when I say that you are safe with me? Only have confidence and return to the inn!”

He saw he was gradually calming her. At last she put out her hands to him like one appealing to a stern judge.

“What must you think of me?” she said with tears. “O Richard, I didn’t understand what I was doing when I married you! I didn’t think! It was too late when I realized what it meant to become your wife! Then I grew frightened and I came away—came out here. If men only understood women—how different they are! When I left you to-night down stairs, where there were people, and music, and dancing, and all that, still I did not think. It was only when I was alone—then, then the fear came! I thought of my mother. And I remembered Clover. Oh, I was there when”—her voice failed her and it was with a shudder that she murmured half to herself: “Marriage, marriage, how terrible it is!” She bowed her head and when she raised it she spoke more calmly: “I kept thinking of you as a friend. I went on supposing that we would live our life together as we had lived it. Tell me you forgive me, Richard—that you understand!”

She looked at him tearfully, her hands still stretched out in appeal.

He was silent, not knowing what answer to make. She asked him if he understood. How could he understand? As he steadied the boat, chilled, waist-deep in water, he tried to comprehend the strange situation in which marriage had involved him. Could this be the woman he had wed—this stricken, crouching girl who

had sought refuge from him out here in a boat at midnight on the mist-laden river?

Sudden anger took him at this folly, madness. He thought of the humiliation of his position—the public ridicule to which Hecla subjected him. There rose in him a feeling almost of contempt for one so unnatural, so unwomanly. What insult to him; what insult to his love!

But the mood changed as he gazed at her, dejected, terrified; and it was pity only that filled his heart. She was not more than twenty-one, and the morbid shadow of an unhappy girlhood blinded her to the wrong she did him. He had won her hand but her ignorant young heart was not yet his. He had promised to wait—he would abide his time.

“Hecla,” he said in a kind voice, “come back to the inn. You need not be afraid of me. Can’t you trust me when I tell you that?”

“Yes,” she faltered, “I trust you, Richard.”

Silently he waded back to the shore, drawing the boat after him. On the wharf he held out his hand.

“Come,” he commanded. “Come, Hecla!”

She hesitated for a minute, looking at him still a little fearful. Then she took his hand and let him help her out of the boat.

And together they went through the mist to the inn.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHORD OF SELF

From their brief bridal journey Hecla returned to Burnham and Richard Hallett to Snow Shoe, where he lived at a rude hotel-stand conveniently near the coal fields in which he was interested. The criticism passed on Hecla for living in her own home instead of joining her husband at Snow Shoe was not as severe as might have been expected from Dunkirk's gossips. This was partly due to the fact that it was understood she was to go to Richard upon the completion of the new hotel, in which Mr. Markham and others had invested capital with the hope of making a summer resort of the little mountain town. Indeed, it was hardly to be expected that Hecla should give up a comfortable home to endure the hardships of Snow Shoe. The quarters occupied by Hallett were not at all suitable, and Hecla's relatives and certain townspeople who disapproved of the Englishman were of opinion he had shown bad taste in marrying so prematurely, before he could provide his wife with the comforts to which she was accustomed.

Hallett's belief in the future of Snow Shoe was, however, his excuse for his marriage. The mine proved to be a rich one, and the general public had gained faith

in the mineral wealth of the region, so that capital for improving the town was forthcoming with such result the town in a short time had increased in size, and various improvements had taken place in its appearance. Railroad surveys had been made, and it was expected that before long there would be a line connecting the region with the outside world. Hallett, who refused to consider Burnham his home, was confident that by the time the handsome new hotel was finished Snow Shoe would be so transformed Hecla would not find it uncongenial or lonely.

People said that Hecla would make an ideal wife, since she had shown such beautiful devotion to her father, and there was every reason to believe the flattering predictions were being realized.

Hecla had resolved, when she married Richard Hallett, that she would show herself a helpful, responsive companion, and in the hope that she might better meet Richard's serious tastes, she spent much time in reading and study. Accustomed to be depended on by her father for sympathetic understanding, she was persuaded that her husband expected her to fill a similar place in his life. Having told him that she could not reciprocate his love, Hecla strove to satisfy him in other phases of the marriage relation. Not satisfied with giving him her admiration and esteem, she lost no opportunity in her conversation with others to express the sentiments his character inspired in her. Hallett had respected the uncontrollable feelings which had revealed themselves on their wedding night, for he knew they sprang from the deep shock to her early girlhood; and Hecla was grateful to him for the kindness and consideration he had

shown. It was not her instinct to dwell on love's passionate side, and having herself returned to that old quiet sense of companionship with him, which had blinded her to the full meaning of her promise to wed him, she believed that Hallett had likewise adjusted himself to this idea of marriage. Hallett had never afterward alluded to Hecla's flight from the hotel the night of their wedding and the confession she had then made to him. Having a strong man's confidence in his power to win to himself her weaker womanhood, he made no claims on her affection, but waited, assured that her morbidity and fears would vanish from her heart.

Hallett's work kept him a great deal of the time at the mine, but he went to Burnham to see his wife as often as possible, frequently tramping the long distance on foot in the roughest weather. When they were together Hecla at first almost unvaryingly began by asking him about his work, encouraging him to talk of his ambitions and future plans. Gradually, however, it became plain to her that he did not meet this with the pleasure she had anticipated. Hallett regarded his hours with his wife as an escape from business cares and felt little inclination to revive them in Hecla's society. At length she asked him why he was so loath to discuss his practical affairs with her.

"Because there are so many better things to talk about," he replied.

"I thought work was first with you always, Richard."

"It is first with me when I am out in the world, Hecla, but last when I'm with you."

She was not satisfied with this answer, however; she could not help feeling that it reflected upon her sympathy with and understanding of a man's larger aims.

"Then you didn't marry me for intellectual sympathy. I thought you liked an intelligent woman."

"I married you for something more human than intellect."

As she spoke Hecla twisted a button of his coat, pondering over this unexpected attitude of her husband toward her. At last the button fell on the floor, and as she took her needle to repair the damage, she murmured:

"I suppose it is a woman's fate never to rise above the rank of seamstress and cook."

"It is the little things that count, Hecla. They are what a man most prizes in a wife."

The effect of this talk with him showed itself in her reading. She had applied herself to many wearisome pages of geology and other works of science under the belief that she was pleasing him. He had encouraged her, supposing her mind craved such knowledge, and often making an effort to discuss what she read when he was tired. She dropped her study now with a sense of diminished importance that was hard to bear. But she still talked to him in German. She had acquired some fluency in that language at Lititz, and he knew enough to make conversation possible between them.

"Do you like me to talk to you in German, Richard?" she asked him one day.

"It depends on what we are discussing. It seems unprofitable, doesn't it, for its own sake? I like you to

talk in your own tongue because then you seem more natural—more like my own wife.”

His arm stole around her as he spoke, but she moved away from him, wounded that he took her efforts at self-improvement so lightly.

Sometimes she commented on the infrequency of his visits, taxing him half-seriously with growing indifference as the cause. She resented, too, that he came, as he often said, when he was fatigued from overwork and craved solace and quiet from business thoughts.

“Why do you come only when you are tired?” she demanded. “Don’t you need to see me at other times?”

“You know I need you always,” he answered, letting his eyes dwell fondly on her half-averted face. “I long for the day to arrive when we shall never be separated. We must look forward to that, Hecla!”

“Yes, we must look forward to that,” she echoed mechanically. She sat a while in thoughtful silence. Then she said abruptly:

“Richard, why won’t you accept any help from me? I told you what great happiness it would be to divide my income with you. You could be so much more comfortable.”

“You know I can not agree to that, Hecla!”

“But you are so handicapped for want of capital. Why don’t you take part of my fortune and invest it at Snow Shoe? I feel selfish, having so much more than you. Let me lend you the money, then, and you can repay me when your mine succeeds.”

“You know how I feel on the subject of your fortune, Hecla. We have discussed it several times before, and I seldom change my mind.”

"It seems such an injustice that a man of your ability should be paid so little for his services. I think Mr. Markham ought to give you a larger salary for your management of the mine. Does he value you no more than that?"

"Mr. Markham does value my services, Hecla, and he pays me what he can. He knows, too, that I have had other advantageous offers from English mine-owners."

"You refused them and never told me?"

"Why trouble you with such practical matters? I made up my mind what I should do if I received other offers before they came. I intend to stay at Snow Shoe and make a success of the mine there."

"And you considered me, too," she said gratefully. "You knew I shouldn't want to leave Dunkirk."

"No, Hecla, that had nothing to do with my refusing," he said with his characteristic candor. "I believed it my duty to stand by Mr. Markham and the mine."

Somehow she felt unreasonably hurt at this reply. He recognized his duty toward Mr. Markham and their business investments, but did his words not prove his lack of consideration for her? She began to fancy he loved her less and, womanlike, the thought increased her feeling for him a little. A certain softness crept into the tone with which she spoke to him sometimes when they were alone together, and she gave him many small marks of regard new in their intercourse; but the effect of this upon him alarmed her and she returned to the self-poise of their calmer relations.

With the point of her finger she idly traced the cord-like veins of his masterful hand.

"How cold your touch is, Hecla!" he smiled.

"And how hot yours is!" she answered. "I often fancy you have fever. Richard, are you sure you're well?"

"Yes, I'm perfectly well."

But he was not in the robust health he had enjoyed up to the time of his coming to Dunkirk. The exacting work of overseeing the mine, the endurance of rough weather, the hundred details of business which claimed his attention, were taxing his constitution. He could have thrown off the effects of his hard toilsome life were it not for sleeplessness at night. Passion preyed upon him, man that he was of strong though reserved emotion. He never told Hecla of the long hours when he lay on his solitary bed, open-eyed, thinking of her, stirred by the longings of love. Often, to dispel these harassing moods and appealing images of the night hours, he lit his candle and read until dawn brought the absorptions of another day.

The heavy snows of a rigorous winter had fallen upon the world and the trip to Snow Shoe was so difficult that Hecla had never made her husband a visit. But as the spring came on she went to see the mine and view the changes that had taken place in the little mountain town. Snow Shoe was on a bench of the Alleghanies, and the small tavern where Hallett had his quarters was so situated the eye swept a wide expanse of cleared land that melted into distant blue ranges broken by rocky peaks; in addition to the town only handfuls of miners' huts relieved the barrenness of the landscape. The tavern was a small cheaply-built structure, intended to accommodate travelers on the

stage that ran once a week from Dunkirk to small hamlets scattered through the region. Hecla found the dinner wretched. She criticized this, but not ill-naturedly. The rudeness of Snow Shoe revolted her.

"How wild and bleak it is here," she sighed, "and how unpromising!"

"You must look at it with the eyes of faith—see it as it will be a few years hence, when it will be a flourishing town."

"It takes a good deal of faith, doesn't it? I ought to borrow Harmony's eyes for that: she is so good at such things."

"Yes, what a dear girl Harmony is!"

"I shouldn't wonder if you had found her more congenial than I am, Richard. Now you know me, aren't you sorry sometimes that you asked me to marry you?"

"Hecla, I have begged you never to speak so. You are the only woman I ever wished to have as wife."

"Let me see your rooms," she said.

He had a sitting-room with an adjoining bedchamber. Hecla, as she entered, thought how poor and dingy his quarters were.

"And so this is how you live!" she exclaimed in distress. "I believed you were more comfortable. O Richard, why have you never told me? There is so much I could have done to make the rooms brighter."

"I need nothing, Hecla. It is not a lack of furniture that makes the rooms seem empty to me sometimes. You see," he added, "the rooms are big enough for two. So if ever—"

She turned from him nervously. Something she could not have analyzed made her heart ache.

"Richard, if my home were only nearer," she sighed. "You could live there—live as a gentleman should."

"Wait," he answered with a cheerful smile. "Wait until the town has grown and the new hotel is ready. Then everything will be different, and I shall be more than happy, Hecla!"

She was moving about, curiously examining his belongings. Here and there a touch struck her. "Why, Richard," she remarked, "you have quite a woman's hand at arranging your rooms. I had not supposed a man could do so well."

"I did not arrange them. Harmony came up one day and did it. I thought it so kind of her."

"Harmony!" she exclaimed. "She never told me."

"It was during your visit to your sister Lucia, I think."

"And why did you, Richard, never speak of it, either? If you wished your rooms arranged for you, could you not have asked me?" She spoke with quick emotion.

"I did not ask Harmony. She came of her own accord. It was not necessary for her to do it, Hecla. If it mattered I should have asked you, of course. A man does not consider trifles like that."

She could not conquer her pain, however. She was wounded, indignant at Harmony. How officious of her and what bad taste to come! And never to have mentioned her visit! She looked out of the window biting her lip.

"Richard, I thought you had no secrets from me," she said wretchedly.

"I have none, Hecla."

"You do not love me," she cried, choking.

He caught her to his heart with a passion of tenderness, but she struggled out of his arms.

"What is the matter?" he asked, repulsed. "What has hurt you so?"

With an effort she repressed her tears.

"It is nothing," she said. "Only you ought to respect me enough to have forbidden Harmony's doing what I only should have done."

It was time for the stage to start for Dunkirk, and as he helped Hecla on with her wraps he looked at her with all his love in his grave weather-browned face.

"Hecla," he said, "now that you have come to me I feel as if I couldn't let you go. Why must you leave me?"

"You know that I must go, Richard."

"Only another day—only until to-morrow!"

She trembled at his look.

"The stage will be leaving," she said nervously, drawing her hands from his detaining clasp.

He stood at the door of the inn watching the coach roll away. Hecla leaned out and waved her hand to him and he returned the greeting with a smile. Then he went back to his rooms and, sitting down, opened a book. But he did not read. And slowly the light of day faded while he remained in a reverie. How much her presence in his poor quarters had meant! Now that she was gone the brightness that had filled them was gone, too. He aroused himself at length with a sigh. "What a dreamer I am!" he exclaimed, and lighting the lamp, he took paper and pen and began writing an article for the newspaper on *Snow Shoe and Its Resources*.

Six months had passed since Hecla's marriage, and while she had thought much on the subject she had not yet spoken to her husband of his entering into partnership with Dave in the management of the Works. Powerful as the idea had been in influencing her in bestowing her hand on one she did not love, she shrank from the idea that it was time to act. True, she had touched on the plan in a conversation with her brother, putting it in the form of a question whether he would not like to have Richard's help and advice in conducting his business, and it was partly due to Dave's instant offense and accusation that she desired to displace him to foster her husband's interests she let the matter drop. She could not, in fact, have gone further than to suggest the arrangement to Dave, since the lease she had signed had not yet expired, and he was therefore for the time being master of the furnace.

Hecla had, also, as a further excuse for shirking her responsibility, the change in Dave since his attempt at taking his life. He had been sobered by the trouble into which his dissipations had led him, and had made a real effort to keep his vows of reformation. He had also applied himself more diligently to his business. Hecla, beholding this, was quick to accept it as a complete justification of her faith in her brother. She felt indeed almost a pride in him when, just before her marriage, the half-year's settlement with the estate falling due, Dave promptly met the obligation.

To do this he had resorted to borrowing a large sum of money. Hecla's marriage had filled him with alarm; he had not forgotten that his sister had used the Englishman's name to force him to marry Clover Littlepage.

He had therefore considered it urgent that he should give Hecla no grounds for dissatisfaction with him by defaulting in the autumn payment.

Unfortunately, immediately after he had given his note for this large amount, had come the panic of fifty-seven, which had so seriously demoralized the country that Dave, like other iron-masters of Pennsylvania, had shut down the Works until times improved. However, as the financial crisis continued longer than he had anticipated, Dave relighted Hecla Furnace, saying that it was better to sell iron for a short time at cost rather than have the Works stand idle. The price of metal obstinately remained low during the winter, so that by spring Dave found himself seriously involved.

It was shortly after Hecla's visit to Snow Shoe that he confessed as much to his sister, laying his trouble to the account of the panic, which had so crippled business at large. So convincingly did he present his case that Hecla was won over to Dave's point of view, and agreed with him that he was the victim of persistent bad luck. Dave proposed that a mortgage be placed on the Works. He had embarrassed himself, he argued, as much for her sake as his own, and it was only fair that she should come to his rescue. By mortgaging the property he would be able to go on with the business and thus meet the good times, which were near at hand and would again set him on his feet.

It was necessary, however, to gain Wentworth's consent to the mortgage, and Hecla went at once to his office, promising Dave to plead his cause eloquently.

Far from approving the scheme, Wentworth took the position that the Works had better be sold.

"Sell the Works, Wentworth!" Hecla exclaimed, looking her indignant reproach. "Why, rather than that I would sacrifice every penny I own. The furnace is a monument to father's memory, a reminder to everybody of his business genius. How can you propose such a thing! I should feel as if I had sold my birthright!"

"That is my opinion, Hecla. It is the only wise thing to do. I appreciate your feelings about the Works, but the situation is too serious to permit of sentiment. David has involved himself more and more, and I have no belief in his power to extricate himself. I can see only ruin ahead if he continues the management. You know I expressed the same view of the case when you defended him in the matter of the first payment. I warned you then that you were doing wrong to lend him the money to make up his deficit to the estate. He met the last payment, it is true, but how did he do it? By borrowing the money. I should consider myself false to my trusteeship if I consented to the mortgage. No, the only thing is to sell. I am sorry, Hecla, but that is the stand I am compelled to take. Remember, you have Jervis to consider as well as Dave."

"You have never done Dave justice," was her quick answer. "You look at everything concerning him through your prejudice, Wentworth! David has had to contend against the world's bad opinion and the outrageous stigma of Benjamin Truelove's prediction. I admit he has committed follies, has shown himself weak in some ways, but he has fought his failings bravely and devoted himself conscientiously to his business the last half-year. He never would have got into his present difficulties if it had not been for the panic."

"The panic, yes, but it is Dave all the same. Hecla, you are blind to your brother's faults. You speak of him as a victim of circumstances. The plea is almost a condemnation in itself. A man makes his circumstances. Dave had no handicaps when Uncle Joshua leased the furnace to him; the business was the finest in the county. Think of the condition to which he has reduced it in two years! I am confident that if the Works had been in good hands there would be no need now of discussing its sale!"

She looked at him remorsefully. "Wentworth, do you really mean what you say? Do you," she hesitated for a moment, "do you think that if Richard, for instance, had taken charge of the business, it would have tided the panic?"

"Your husband has no practical knowledge of iron-making, but he is the kind of man who would quickly master details. Yes, I think he'd have made a success of the Works just as he is making a success of Snow Shoe."

"And you think he might save it yet?"

"It is quite possible. Business success is mostly a matter of energy and good sense; he certainly has those requisites."

"Then," she answered, "there is no further need of considering the sale. I shall ask Richard to take charge of the Works."

"But how can he do so, Hecla, with his mine and other interests at Snow Shoe? I doubt whether he will be willing to give up his work there. You know how his heart is set on making a success of his mine."

"You quite mistake my husband, Wentworth," she

said proudly, "if you imagine he will be unwilling to do what I ask. If the furnace can be saved through his taking charge, you may count on his consent."

"But, Hecla, isn't that demanding a great deal?"

"Demanding a great deal?" she echoed. "Richard knows how I love the old furnace my father left me. He will be glad to do anything to save it."

As Hecla walked home she thought of how she might best reconcile Dave to the necessity of yielding place to her husband in the control of the Works. His pride would make it hard for him for a while, but his good sense would conquer in the end. He and Richard would give Hecla Furnace the prestige it had enjoyed under her father's firm hand. Surely Dave would prefer this arrangement to seeing the Works pass out of the family possession!

When her husband came to Burnham in obedience to a message that she wished to see him at once, Hecla laid the situation before him: how embarrassed David was; his proposition to place a mortgage on the Works; and Wentworth's disapprobation of the scheme.

"I want your opinion, Richard," she continued. "Wentworth is prejudiced against my brother, and I have never forgotten what you said to me about Dave on the ride to Moshannon Hall. Tell me, do you disapprove of the mortgage?"

"I must say I agree with Wentworth, Hecla."

"But," she replied disappointedly, "I thought you were different from the rest. I counted on your belief in my brother!"

"It is not a question of belief in your brother, but of prudence. I know very little practically about iron

furnaces, but as a general thing I object to mortgages. They encumber property and, judging from the present business outlook, I think a serious risk is run in mortgaging the furnace. I should say it were infinitely better to sell, if you get a good offer."

She did not contest his opinion further, since it concurred with Wentworth's. It was the view of two practical men against her inexperienced woman's judgment. She therefore decided to speak at once of the plan of Richard's taking charge of the Works in partnership with Dave.

"Richard," she began, "ever since my visit to Snow Shoe I have been troubled over the discomfort of your life there. I suppose you have wondered sometimes that I have never alluded to the partnership arrangement. But you know David leased the Works before our marriage."

"What do you mean, Hecla, by 'the partnership arrangement'?" he asked.

"Why, your helping David manage the furnace, of course," she answered with a little gesture of impatience. "You must surely have considered the probability of your connection with the Works. Why, half Dunkirk expected that you would go into business with David as soon as you married me."

"The idea never crossed my mind, Hecla."

"Ah, Richard," she said with a grateful look and quick softening of the voice, "that was because you have always had such faith in my brother, wasn't it? It hasn't been Dave's fault that he has got into difficulties. I thought you'd sympathize with me in opposing Wentworth whenever he found fault with my

brother's ability. It is because of such feelings that I want you and him to be partners. You *respect* each other—and that is so much.”

“But, Hecla,” her husband interrupted in surprise, “I can’t go into partnership with your brother; I have my mine and I am pledged to Mr. Markham to make it a success. It’s the ambition of my life to develop the coal industry of Snow Shoe.”

“Yes, I know how faithfully you’ve worked for Mr. Markham,” she said hastily, “but, Richard, surely he will understand why you resign your management of the mine. He can hardly expect you not to help Dave in his present straits.”

“It is not the question of Mr. Markham’s feelings, Hecla, it is what I feel myself. I should consider that I had treated him outrageously if I threw up my management of the mine.”

“But you don’t seem to realize that you are really needed; that the condition of affairs at the Works is desperate. In Wentworth’s opinion it is a question of selling the property or having your help.”

“It does not alter the fact,” he returned, “that I am bound to Mr. Markham, Hecla. If it were say a half-year hence, it might be feasible for me to consider the idea; but Snow Shoe is in its most critical stage of development. It is not too much to claim that just now my presence at Snow Shoe is indispensable to Mr. Markham; that the loss of my services would be a serious handicap to the success of the mine.”

“You would let my father’s furnace go to ruin, Richard!” was her exclamation. “Don’t you realize its failure will make me a poor woman?”

"A poor woman!" he said with a smile. "I often wish you *were* a poor woman, Hecla, for the pleasure and pride I should feel in giving you everything. Your wealth has never mattered to me. You need not fear poverty through the failure of the furnace. It will only be a short time—perhaps no more than a year—when I shall be a rich man. We only need the railway to open out the region and the future of Snow Shoe is assured."

She looked at him as though her surprise bewildered her; she never for a moment had doubted that Richard would accept the management of the Works; she had indeed even pictured him accepting with emotions almost of gratitude. To Hecla her father's business on the verge of failure represented a far more honorable occupation for her husband than Snow Shoe, in its brilliant promise of success.

"Richard," she controlled her voice with an effort, "am I to understand then that you *refuse* to go into partnership with Dave?"

He watched her face grow tense with angry disappointment; and he said gently:

"Hecla, it pains me to seem indifferent to your interests, but my refusal is a matter of honor, of fairness to Mr. Markham. Would you want your husband to be false to his obligations? It is my duty to stand by the mine."

"You are very particular about your duty to others, Richard," she retorted with bitterness. "But do you remember your duty to me—your wife? You claim you love me, yet you fail me at such a time—fail me in a matter so vital to me and my family. Why," she cried,

drawing a quick breath, "when I married you I felt almost as if you had given me your solemn promise you would help Dave if necessary!"

Her words were like an accusation, and his voice showed that he felt her injustice.

"I do not understand how you could have felt that our marriage implied such a promise. I remember no occasion in which the matter was discussed between us. You knew at the time of my business investments; how it was my dearest ambition to make a success of the mine."

"My father's letter—" she began; then pride stopped her lips. Why should she tell him how her father depended on him; and of his distrust of David.

"And so," she continued after a passionate pause, "I must inform Wentworth that my husband has failed me—that I trusted too much to his affection!"

Her hands were wrung together and she bit her lip to suppress her emotion. He noted this and the whiteness of her look.

"Hecla," he said gently, "do you think you are quite just to me? Don't you see that I love you too dearly ever to want to grow less in your eyes by acting weakly and against my own convictions of right?" He let one hand fall lightly on her shoulder as he stood looking down upon her where she sat, her brooding eyes half closed and fixed on the carpet. "What would you think of me if I forfeited my self-respect, even to save your father's furnace? You will come to look at my refusal in the right light, Hecla, and be glad of it."

"I shall never see it in any other light but the truth," was the reply. "Ambition is first with you,

your wife second. You want to prove to the world that it was mistaken in its opinion of Snow Shoe and you sacrifice me rather than your pride." She rose and going to the fireplace leaned there, her face hidden from him. "I can hardly believe," she said after a moment of silence, "that you are the same man I married with such confidence. Richard, how you have disappointed me!" Her lip quivered; her eyes filled with tears.

He went to her, saying patiently: "Hecla, you are angry, blinded by your feelings. You will regret your words when you consider the matter calmly."

"No," she answered, "I shall not regret my words. My faith in you is shaken. I shall never feel the same towards you. How can you expect me to believe you love me when you refuse to save my brother from failure!"

"I love you and still refuse to do what you ask of me," he answered, and she could see that while his voice was full of kindness she had not moved his will. "You are mistaken, Hecla: it is not ambition that is first with me; it is honor."

When he had left her she threw herself among the pillows on the sofa. "Why, *why*, did I marry him?" she asked herself bitterly. Then after a little: "O Wentworth, Wentworth!"

CHAPTER X

THE STRONG NECESSITY OF LOVING

It was a late autumn afternoon, a year after Hecla's marriage. Mr. Donovan was getting on his horse in front of Mrs. Tathem's boarding-house when the judge of the county court, who was one of his parishioners, paused to speak to him.

"Off on your circuit, I suppose," he said in his gruff voice. "You and Proudfoot seem to have a wager as to which of you can do the most good for the community. And both equally badly paid for your services! I often tell Proudfoot he ought to collect his bills, but when he needs money he prefers to borrow rather than do that. He'd be living in comfort if he got what people owe him. I think the legislature ought to frame a law empowering physicians of the soul to collect bills for their physicking—so much for every soul saved."

Just then Empty Ned, the village half-wit, passed along the street with his strange dancing gait, and seeing Mr. Donovan, came up to him eagerly, saying:

"I'm off to-day to get married, Mr. Donovan, but I'll be back in time to pump the organ next Sunday."

"Very well, Ned," Mr. Donovan answered at this oft-repeated announcement, "and don't forget to come to early morning service."

The poor fellow's face shone with sudden joy. "I'll

be there, Mr. Donovan. I wouldn't miss communion to get married twice over!"

"I hope your bride is as good a church member as you, Ned," the judge smiled, feeling in his pocket. "Here's something for a wedding gift." Empty Ned took the silver the judge slipped into his hand, and skipped off gaily, laughing and swinging his old fur cap.

"I am glad, Donovan," the judge remarked as they looked after him, "that you persuaded the bishop to allow Ned to be confirmed. He's not the empty vessel he's thought to be by people who congratulate themselves on their own holiness. Yes, poor Ned was a touching sight at his first communion! I used to think about him nights, worrying over the poor boy's hunger for salvation, and I found it difficult to go through service knowing he was up there in the organ-loft crying because he wanted to go to the Lord's Supper with the others. On what mission are you bound to-day?"

"I am going out to Snow Shoe."

"Well, I hope those miners appreciate your labors for their good."

"I appreciate the good they do me," was the answer.

"And your friend, Hallett, how is he getting on with his work there?"

"I believe the mine is doing splendidly now. It has been a struggle and Hallett's health shows the strain. He's a strong man, but—"

"You mean his married life? I confess, I can not understand Hecla Sandwith. She was a noble daughter to old Joshua, and seemed to have the making of an excellent wife. What the devil did she marry Hallett for if she didn't intend to live with him!"

"It does seem strange," Donovan admitted reluctantly, for he was not given to gossiping over his friends' affairs, "but you know, Judge, I'm prejudiced. I am very fond of Hallett and I fear I have never liked his wife."

"No, and she has never forgiven you your quarrel with her father, has she? What a hot-blooded old fellow Joshua was, but as honest as the day is long! And there was a big heart under that plain coat of his, too! I fear the Works are not in as good hands now. Why doesn't Hallett take hold there? He's badly needed, I understand."

"Hallett's heart is set on making Snow Shoe a success. I doubt if anything could induce him to abandon his work at the mines. It's a matter of pride with him, you know. People doubted that Snow Shoe had any future. That idea is pretty well exploded now, isn't it?"

"Yes; it's wonderful what Hallett has done for the place, I admit."

As Donovan rode out to Snow Shoe he thought over his friend Hallett's situation. The judge's criticism of Hecla was only the echo of much general comment, mostly of an ill-natured character. The Sandwiths were not popular at Dunkirk. Their Quaker pride and exclusiveness, their wealth and what was considered their parade of honesty in business and other relations of life, had combined to excite criticism and envy in many persons like Mrs. Tathem and her daughter Pinkie. It was on their doorstep that the thistle of gossip had sprouted and scattered its winged seeds on the ever-ready breezes of Dunkirk. It was perhaps natural that the unusual arrangement of Hecla's continuing to live

at Burnham while her husband dwelt at Snow Shoe should have caused town-talk. And Miss Pinkie Tathem, who had ever been jealous of Hecla's looks and luxuries, and could not forgive her her disdain of sociables and picnics in which she herself delighted as a true Dunkirkian, lost no occasion for insinuating the least favorable motives for Hecla's conduct.

Mr. Donovan gave small heed to the gossip, but he had of late grown anxious about Hallett's health, and he found it difficult to look leniently on the fact that Hecla allowed her hard-worked husband to lead his lonely life out at Snow Shoe, while she continued to dwell at ease in her own home. True, there were good reasons up to the present time for this arrangement. The isolation of Snow Shoe, the roughness of life in what had been in the beginning a mere handful of houses, explained Hallett's reluctance to take his wife there. But now the new hotel had opened and the town that clustered around it had grown surprisingly. Indeed, everything promised that the region would shortly become an important center, destined, perhaps, to out-rival Dunkirk in its business interests. So Donovan felt that Hallett was carrying his consideration for his wife too far. In addition Donovan, as a clergyman, too reverently prized the sacred duties of wedlock not to be a little scandalized at Hallett's mode of living. Perhaps also Donovan's own disappointment in losing Harmony made him unconsciously somewhat bitter at seeing this married couple so far from realizing what would have been his own idea of the married relation.

That evening Donovan went, as was his habit when at Snow Shoe, to the Englishman's rooms. The two

men had become very good friends, each appreciating the other's qualities and character. Hallett valued the excellent influence Donovan had gained among his miners, and did all in his power to further the young rector's work. After services and the short practical homilies Donovan made to the men, he and Hallett would sometimes sit for hours smoking and talking. On this particular evening Donovan was really shocked by Hallett's appearance. He not only looked worn but his manner denoted a feverish condition. Truly, the year had left its marks on Hallett's face, he thought to himself. The coal-mining company was now on the road to success, but it was success bought at the price of the overseer's health. Yet, was it alone the mine that had wrought this extraordinary change?

When the two friends were seated around the mellow glow of the lamp in Hallett's rooms, the Englishman, leaning back in his chair, and with an air of satisfaction, said to his guest: "I am glad you stopped in to-night, Donovan! Now and then the evenings seem a bit long out here and somehow I've not been feeling up to the mark lately. I must go to Philadelphia in a week or two to meet some Welsh emigrants we have engaged. Probably the trip will do me good."

"You don't look fit for the journey, Hallett," the rector remonstrated warmly. "You should consider yourself more. Even strong men like you can overdo."

"There is nothing seriously wrong with me," was the reply. "I need a little rest, perhaps. But this would be a bad time to take it. I hope, however, soon to have the mining company on such a basis I need feel no more anxiety. But my work is a threadbare topic,

Donovan. Let us talk of other things. I have been reading an interesting book." And Hallett picked up a volume dealing with the phenomena of religious life of early Pennsylvania: the rise of the German Seventh Day Baptists and the establishment of the monastic community at Ephrata in Lancaster County. They discussed the poetic customs, the midnight services, the lofty music and exaggerated mystic piety of the cloistered devotees of the latter institution. The rector considered that the ideals of the monastery were too closely akin to the Church of Rome, and Richard Hallett dwelt on the mistaken religious fervor which precluded marriage from the scheme of earthly existence.

"Why don't you marry, Donovan?" he said abruptly as they finished talking.

The ample tone had a shade of pity in it as though Richard Hallett looked down on his bachelor friend from his heights of assured happiness. It was like salt to the rector's slowly healing wound, and he flushed sensitively.

"Marriage, Hallett," he said slowly, seizing the opportunity the other had given him to approach this subject, "sometimes leaves much to be desired. For instance, I should not be content to accept matrimony on your conditions. It seems to me that in spite of being a married man you pretty well realize the monastical idea you have been condemning."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, what is marriage when one lives separated from one's wife like you? You pity my singleness. I pity your married life, for is it not the more solitary state? When do you expect to move into the new hotel?" he ended.

"Why, shortly now. You know it has only been completed a few weeks and I am waiting for my wife to go there. Complications in her household have delayed her coming. Her little brother Jervis has been ailing and Hetty Waln has quarreled with her uncle Gideon Sandwith over her fortune and sought an asylum at Burnham, as perhaps you have heard. But I hope that it will not be long now till my wife is able to make the move." His voice was quiet and a smile lightened Richard Hallett's face, as it did always when he mentioned his wife.

Donovan looked at him affectionately. He was moved by his friend's patience and fortitude.

"Hallett," he remonstrated, "you ought to think more of your own happiness. Don't you know how much better it is to be firm with women?"

"Be firm with women? Pray, explain yourself!" Richard Hallett's voice showed offense.

"I mean, Hallett, that you ought to assert yourself. You are not well; this hard work and lonely life are telling on you. Woman's company and care are what you need. Mrs. Hallett's place is out here with you!"

"Why, Donovan, you forget yourself!" Hallett said in astonishment at the other's liberty. Anger reddened his face as he spoke.

Donovan answered impetuously: "I express only the common opinion of the town. To be frank with you, the general belief is that your wife has no intention of leaving Burnham."

"You dare to tell me this—to retail gossip unworthy a gentleman's ears?"

"I speak as a friend!"

"There is a limit to what friendship permits. You have transgressed that limit, sir. You insult me in insulting my wife. Why,"—and Richard Hallett could scarce contain himself—"if you were not my guest and a minister of the gospel you should answer for your impertinence!"

The rector's face showed the pain of misunderstood friendship.

"As for being your guest," he said hotly, "that can easily be remedied. You insult me as much as you fancy I have insulted you by misconstruing my sympathy."

"What need have I of your sympathy or of anybody's sympathy! I have no fault to find with my wife. I would have you know I revere her as a woman above my deserts, and the scandal-mongers who bandy her name on Dunkirk doorsteps."

Richard Hallett sat alone in his rooms until the midnight hour struck. His mind was absorbed by anger and worship of his wife. He had been wounded in the most sacred side of his nature, and by one for whom he had a deep attachment. Hecla had been traduced, misrepresented before the world, her love for him questioned, denied. His one thought was to redeem this slight cast upon her by a new and larger devotion. At the intoning of the clock he stretched himself on his bed. Never had he felt for Hecla a greater access of passion. The desire to hold her in his arms, to tell her all that dwelt unspoken in his heart, grew with the passing hours. He trusted her so completely that never in the one year of their married life had a shadow of

doubt fallen across his soul. Freshly now he prized all she had been to him.

Yet as he lay on his bed the isolation of his life thus tactlessly alluded to by Donovan began gradually to pierce through these tender passionate thoughts of his wife. He felt as never before how unsatisfactory his married life was, how deeply all that had been denied him had worn upon him as a man. This marital sacrifice, rather than his anxious and exacting work, had been the cause of his loss of health. Often, he admitted to himself, would the bitterness of his lonely days have oppressed him had not unremitting labor been his solace and opiate.

The darkness weighed upon him and the nervous strain of his emotions filled his eyes with little sparkles and glimmers. At length he got up and sat down by the window, letting the sharp night air blow on his face and open chest.

It was November and no moon was in the night; the outside world had a vast and solemn stillness. He felt nature around him. It seemed to push a grave inquiring face into his room as it wrapped swarthy arms around the inn. The tavern stood solitary in the midst of spreading solitude. The absolute possession of the night there among the mountain wilds impressed him as never before. It seemed to him that the long lapse of the blank hours imposed on mankind the sad necessity to think, to solve torturing soul-problems. He gazed out on the void of darkness doming the world, darkness unillumined save by dim stars, remote, hinting of undiscoverable regions of the spirit. His mind swept on in vague inquiry. What did life mean?

He thought of Byron's poem on *Darkness* and he pondered the sentiments of the last man alive lingering on through the interminable wane of sunless hours. He felt the ache, the pathos of human brevity, the tragedy of our little hurrying here and there, our hopes, our dreams, our despairs, our anguish alternating with moments of joy that leap up like flame from dry heaps of leaves. He remembered death, its prudence and reserve, and how soon or late the futile ashes of our being are blown across the world. And all that had seemed worthy: his manhood's strength, his aims that had soared so high on consecrated wings, his confidence that had given him power, suddenly faded and crumbled into nothingness. How little we accomplished and what indeed our hand wrought, time blotted out, even as the wave on the shore sweeps away idle sand-fortresses children rear!

He was lonely; but how lone was all humanity! Soul spoke to soul in a faint and scarce intelligible tongue. If there was relief for this pall of separate human life it was the love of husband and wife—that nearest, dearest, most sacred tie uniting heart with heart to banish the mind's melancholy. And as he meditated on this, the image of Hecla rose before his eyes, pale, removed, inexplicable, unresponsive.

On her and her alone his hopes were fixed. And how much did she understand? The accusations uttered that night had sunk unwittingly into his soul like bits of lead. His ideals had been shocked by a friend's words; a rude hand had touched things hitherto sacred from analysis. Now a process of inquiry began within him. He sifted the past; he examined it minutely; he looked

on all with judicial eyes. He had believed in her so steadfastly, he had accepted in the spirit of heroic self-denial the restriction she placed on his passionate love, pitying the uncontrolled fears that had caused her to act as she had done on their marriage night. He had accepted this half-marriage, this union of the spirit and not of the body, patiently, nay heroically. He never quite gaged the morbidity and warp of nature that inspired Hecla's dread and physical distaste of him, but he loved her—and love evoked in him gentleness, delicacy, consideration, such sacrifice as few men would make. But the acceptance of the conditions of marriage which these feelings demanded of him had preyed upon his health and happiness. He had sacrificed himself because he was grateful to her for having wedded him. Was she deserving his sacrifices and his worship? With the search-light of outside opinion he scrutinized the history of their life together. Little things that had meant nothing to him in his hot human affection for her commenced to gather significance. She had never promised to love him. Was he, after all, blindly adoring a hollow shell? Had he dwelt weakly in an iris-colored mist of self-deception?

He went on thinking till a great chill crept like white winter across his mind. But he resisted it. What would life be if she failed him? What would be left him if this dream darkened and died out like a spent flame? The fever of passion once more mounted in him. His wife cared for him! He would seek her and prove to the world what a wrong it did her. He would make his appeal. She would come at once, unhesitatingly. They would be happy together as they had never been before.

Married life would thenceforth realize his high hopes. He had labored for success and it was in his grasp. But success, what would it be without Hecla's love?

CHAPTER XI

SUNDERED SPIRITS

She was descending the stairs when the next night he entered the hall at Burnham.

"Is that you, Richard?" she asked from the dusk of the landing as he stood, a sober figure in his brown traveling cloak, where the light of the nimbused candles shone on his face. With her usual slow graceful movements Hecla reached the foot of the stairs and presented her cheek. He thought he noted in her voice—the pure modulations of which had so pleased him the first time he saw her—more surprise than pleasure at his unexpected coming.

"Is that all the greeting you have for me?" he asked.

She looked at him with some surprise: he was not used to be dissatisfied with the marks of affection she accorded him. Without waiting for her answer he drew her to him with almost fierce possession.

"Don't," Hecla said, thinking of her dress.

He released her quickly and his eyes took in the details of her attire: the pale silk gown with its purple flounce; the rich hair in a golden net and ornamented with a camellia of white feathers. Over one arm a wrap hung. Richard had noticed the carriage at the door.

"I was going out," she explained. "Jane Hamilton has asked me to a little evening party."

"I did not know you were so fond of pleasure."

"Richard, isn't that a little unjust of you? I care nothing for our town amusements and go nowhere. Tonight Jane urged me to come and I promised. But I am glad of an excuse to give up going. Have you had supper, Richard? Let me get you some."

"I do not wish supper," he answered.

There was something new in his tone and she looked at him with sudden interest.

"You are not well," she said. "I know you are working too hard and need a rest. Richard, you owe something to your health as well as to your business. You are on your way to Philadelphia now, I suppose. Why must you take such a troublesome trip to meet those miners? It seems an unreasonable tax on your strength and time."

"Because they speak Welsh only and will be bewildered, naturally, arriving in a strange country. Besides, I wish to meet them. There is no reason I should not do so—I am not ill."

"If you are not ill, Richard, then something is troubling you," she said concernedly. "Your face shows it. You never tell about your affairs and so I can only guess what is wrong. I sometimes wonder why you withhold your confidence from me. Is it because I am only a woman?"

She moved on into the parlors throwing her wrap upon the sofa. As she passed the mirror she gave an abstracted glance at her reflection. He noted this and thought how careful she was of her beauty for others.

"You take my visits always so calmly," he said in a voice that vented the difficult feelings within him.

"Don't you miss me enough to make my coming a matter of some importance to you?"

She turned her deep eyes on him at this, more acutely noting the newness of his tone—a tone which asserted something that hitherto had never entered into their relations.

"Why, naturally I miss you," she answered in some offense. "Did my welcome seem cold? I am sorry, Richard!"

He did not answer. He was gazing across the tables where the candles stood flickering in the draught that came from an open window, for the night was mild. The memory came back to him of the first time he had seen her two years before, standing on the lighted threshold of Christy Pickle's cottage with the exotic odor of the night-blooming cereus enveloping her in an atmosphere passionate as his dreams had been that night. Was the conception he had formed of her then false, as a lover's fancies are apt to be? How beautiful she was with the refinement of perfect features, yet how unmoved, as it seemed to him to-night, by tenderness! The becoming toilet, with its unusual touches, made him feel a certain remoteness from her. The formal dressing spoke to him like a formal demeanor on her part.

"Why do you look so grave?" she asked presently as he sat in moody silence.

"Am I not to be grave?" he answered. "Life has sobered me. I feel old, yet not old enough willingly to resign the dreams of youth." He stopped abruptly, stifling what seemed like the expression of regrets. "I am a little tired to-night. There has been a good

deal of trouble at the mines. Labor has been unsatisfactory, but the Welsh workers I sent for are good, reliable men, and in a few weeks things will be running smoothly, I hope. Then I shall have more time for rest." He added after a pause: "I was thinking you might be ready to move when I come back from the city."

"Richard," she said appealingly, disregarding his last words, "why do you not give up the mine? The work is wearing you out and there is such little reward for all your sacrifice. Why will you not enter into partnership with Dave and live here at Burnham, where you would have the comforts and surroundings of a gentleman?"

"I have asked you not to speak of that again, Hecla," he said sternly. "You know my feelings. Nothing will ever induce me to give up the mine. I have pledged myself to Mr. Markham to make a success of our undertaking, and I shall do so or fail in the attempt. But you have not answered my question. You can make the change in a week or so?"

She could not speak for a moment. Her throat felt suddenly dry. Her eyes half-closed and her upper lip, lifting a little at one corner, brought a curve into the cheek. It was a wistful expression mixed with wonder at the pain and difficulty of things, at the sacrifices life demanded. He was asking her to abandon her home with its dignity, luxury and recollections, to leave her accustomed surroundings and take up her abode in a rude mining settlement. As his wife she must do as he exacted; yet her heart welled with bitterness. Why should her hopes and plans perish through his passion

for success, because of his pride and belief in Snow Shoe? He wished her to abandon her father's home, yet he was unwilling to relinquish his mine, although in doing so he could help her brother and perhaps rescue the Works from ruin? She had gone on clinging to the belief that he would finally accede to her plea. Her father's letter had been to her almost like a pledge that if she married him he would come to the assistance of her family. Had she sacrificed herself in vain?

He noticed the silent debating of her lips and he said in a gentler tone: "I know, my dear, it is a trial to go away from such a beautiful home as yours. I try to remember all you are giving up for me."

"It is a break, Richard," she said, her voice vibrating with feeling. "I love my old home. I wonder if men ever realize all home means to a woman, how her heart is bound up with it even when those who have made it sacred are gone."

"Yes, I think I understand," he said still more tenderly, covering with his her delicate white hand as it rested on the table.

"How feverish your touch is, Richard! I am sure you can't be well."

"It is the fever of life, that is all," he answered as his gaze continued to dwell on her troubled face. "Life burns in me sometimes with a great longing. I wish, Hecla, you could call home where your husband is. Somehow it hurts me that your eyes turn back always to the past and never to the future. Ought it to be so hard for a wife to sacrifice her fireside to live with her husband?"

She withdrew her hand at this and he went on:

"Hecla, I do not blame you impatiently or with a boy's intolerance; but I think I expected too much of you. I thought you loved me enough to regard your duties toward me not as hardships but as pleasures. Ah, Hecla, if you cared for me as I care for you leaving your home would be easy."

Her delicate nostrils dilated a little and there was a certain thrill of outrage in the tone with which she answered him.

"I do not like you to speak in that way, Richard. You appear to think that I am considering only my own selfish comfort. It is not because of myself that it has been hard for me to give up Burnham. It is my little brother's home as well as mine, the fireside which those dear to me have found waiting and ready for them always. Have you forgotten that I have family ties, obligations to my own blood, that my father's death placed me in a position of responsibility? You say I should find it easy to give up my home. You tell me that you love me, yet you refuse to give up your mine! And I have asked you to do so to save my father's furnace—the furnace which is the monument to his memory and a sacred trust to me. I expected when I married you that you would help David manage, that you would join with me in preserving the interests of those I love." She turned away her head, biting her lips to repress the bitter emotions that mounted in her as she spoke.

"So you married me," he said slowly, "not because you loved me, but to save your own fortune? Hecla, had you no heart?"

"When did I ever promise to love you?" she cried. "Did you ask it of me? Richard, Richard, how unjust

to accuse me of deceiving you! I confess it has been hard for me to think of leaving my home, because so much has held me here; so many troubles and trials have demanded that I should be near my own kin. Do you remember this when you reproach me for lack of duty toward you? Were my obligations to my own family to be forgotten because I married you?"

"So you have never loved me!" he repeated. His face had grown haggard. It was an unbelievably different face from that, ruddy-hued with health, of a year ago. He rose, buttoning his coat, half with the idea of departing and half-instinctively, like a man seeking to keep back words not to be uttered. "I have been blind—blind, indeed, not to see it. What else could I have expected of a woman who fled in fear of her husband on her wedding night? Hecla, you have never loved me."

"And if I've not loved you," she cried in anguish, "is it my fault? Can love be compelled? Ah, why did you insist on marrying me, why did you swear that my not loving you made no difference?"

He stood gazing at her in silence. When he next spoke it was in a voice that seemed to rise from the ruined places of his spirit.

"When I married you I expected to win your love. I failed. I know now that it was because you love your cousin."

"It is not true! I may have loved him once, but I conquered my love. I gave him up for the sake of duty. Ah, it is cruel of you to say that, Richard!"

"You love him yet," he answered. "It is strange that I did not see it before I married you. But why talk of that now, when it is too late? I have spoken of your

coming to Snow Shoe not only for my own sake, but for yours. People have been commenting on your delay. I wished to spare you public criticism."

"Who has criticized me?" Her voice took the note of startled pride.

"Donovan spoke of it as common gossip in Dunkirk. I was angry that he should have repeated this to me; but I believe he was impelled by the false idea I needed counsel. We parted in heat after words were spoken. I resented the liberty he took, but I can not help respecting his good intentions, now my anger has had time to cool."

"Mr. Donovan!" she exclaimed. The pupils of her blue-gray eyes suddenly devoured the iris; her face was transformed by one of those accesses of anger which she inherited from her father. "Richard, I could have borne your insults and misunderstanding of me, but that Mr. Donovan, of all men, should be filling the rôle of sympathizer! Mr. Donovan, who insulted my father and whom you nevertheless claim as friend!" Her voice shook. "To listen to him and then come and reproach me!"

She had arisen from her seat also and stood passionately confronting him. "How false and disloyal to me!" she continued. "And you dare call Mr. Donovan a friend in my presence! You may choose between such a friend and me!"

The rising breeze, as it played through the room, fanned the flames of the candles standing upon the table between them. Then with a slight sputtering sound, first one and then the other taper was extinguished. Neither made a move to light them.

"That is a matter in which I permit no dictation," he answered. "I do not give up my friends at any one's bidding, even my wife's."

"Then I give you up!"

The words slipped involuntarily from her, and they seemed to fall with a significance that startled her like another's voice. It was as if nature had intervened to set upon them the seal of an inevitability. The parlors, at the blowing out of the tapers, had become part of the sad gray twilight falling on the outside world; ghostly shadows of the November eve filled them. A few dying brands on the hearth glowed redly, scarring the gloom, and the white curtains, bellied by the draught, waved like the arms of an entering phantom. They barely saw each other as they stood mute, too strained to speak, too full of their wrongs to speak. After a moment Richard Hallett turned away and the front door closed behind him.

Hecla waited, hearing the sound of his footsteps on the walk, wondering if he would return, yet too angry to protest. Surely he would come back, drawn by love, to make his peace with her. But the sound of his footsteps grew faint and a sudden fear of her husband's character smiting her, she followed him to the door.

"Richard!" she cried.

There was no answer. Did he hear her? On her ear fell only the melancholy chime of late crickets singing out the dead summer in their hearts—all the honey of remembrance thrilling in their tones as they pierced the autumnal eve. Half of a red gibbous moon glowed behind the black hills, and the bare branches of the grove tossed their traceries upon the sky, and the dead leaves

on the garden path shivered as if there swept by an unseen presence. Terror took her and she went on, her wonder deepening.

Was he leaving her for ever? Now her foot struck against the soft body of a toad, and with a sudden shivering dread of the filmy cricket-haunted twilight she fled back to the house.

CHAPTER XII

THE CONSCIENCE PRICK AND MEMORY SMART

Hetty's quarrel with her Uncle Gideon was the latest sensation of Dunkirk. On arriving of age Hetty had demanded her fortune from her uncle, who, already at odds with his niece over her defiance of his authority and teachings, had contended she was not fit to manage her money; and she had been forced to retain Wentworth Oliver as lawyer to fight for her rights. On exchanging her uncle's house for Burnham she had torn off her hated drab gown, stamped on her Quaker bonnet and demanded that Hecla give her her gayest dress to wear until she could order from her mantua-maker a bright red one in which to confront her erst-while guardian, should he pursue her to her asylum. Knowing he had no case against his niece, the old Quaker had come to Burnham to persuade her to return to his home, and on seeing her thus arrayed in worldly finery, he had given one scandalized glance, compared her with the Scarlet Woman and told her she was forever disowned.

To spite her uncle further Hetty had consented to marry her old suitor, Blair Nandine, whom she knew Gideon Sandwith detested. This promise had been given on condition that the happy lover should re-

nounce "colored waistcoats, verse-writing and his common relatives." Wentworth Oliver had never had a case that cost him so much time and trouble as Hetty's suit against her guardian. Hours were consumed in hearing the detailed history of his client's wrongs, and that determined young woman demanded that her unfortunate counsel should study more law so as to find new ways with which to plague her "canting, skinflint, old foggy of an uncle," as Hetty energetically expressed it.

One morning Wentworth was sitting in his office busy with his papers, when he was interrupted by Hetty Waln's excited entrance.

"Wentworth," she cried in her shrill treble, "has thee heard the news? Richard Hallett's been ill at Snow Shoe for the last two weeks. Hecla only heard of it this morning from Rhoda Markham, who came out to call—she's staying with Jane Hamilton, thee knows. Thee may imagine Hecla's surprise, for she thought Richard had gone to Philadelphia, as he intended, but it seems Mr. Donovan persuaded him he wasn't well enough for the journey. It was fortunate he didn't go, for the fever broke out as soon as he reached Snow Shoe. Mr. Donovan has been nursing him. Richard made him and Mr. Markham promise to keep his illness a secret and on no account to let Hecla come to him for fear she'd take the fever. Rhoda told Hecla, though, because neither she nor her father thought it fair not to. The idea of Hecla's not knowing her husband has been ill for two weeks! She's very angry with Mr. Donovan, and, Wentworth, she insists on going out to Snow Shoe to nurse Richard in his stead. I want thee to come to Burnham with me

and prevent her doing such a foolish thing. She'll take the fever—it's something dreadful, like typhus—and give it to me and everybody else."

"I shall go to her at once," Wentworth said; and together they left the office.

"Thee'll try to persuade Hecla not to be silly?" Hetty begged.

"Yes, I'll offer to help Mr. Donovan do the nursing."

"Thee, Wentworth?" Hetty cried. "How can thee talk so when thee knows thee has to get my money away from Uncle Gideon! There's Christy Pickle, she's a good nurse, and nobody would care whether she caught the fever or not. Thee must persuade Hecla to be sensible. She's terribly put out at Mr. Donovan's tending Richard. It is very nice of him, isn't it? I suppose he thought it his Christian duty. Well, it's thy Christian duty, Wentworth, to see that Hecla lets him!"

When they reached Burnham they found the carriage at the door and Hecla ready to depart.

"Don't try to dissuade me from going, Wentworth," she said. "It is useless. I must go to my husband."

"But, Hecla, I understand the fever is typhus. Besides the risk, the nursing will be very difficult. You have had no experience in fever cases, and it will be very awkward for you out there at the tavern. I am perfectly well and I have no fear of contagion. Let me take your place!"

"No one can take my place. Think of it, Wentworth, my husband ill for two weeks and no one to nurse him but Mr. Donovan! You know Doctor Proudfoot has

been confined to his room for a month with gout. Richard begged Mr. Donovan to keep me in ignorance of his condition, but can you understand any one being so cruel as to obey a request like that!"

"Why doesn't thee get Christy Pickle to go, Hecla?" It was Hetty that pleaded. "Thee'll be sure to take the fever and die. Harmony, she ought to have more consideration for us, oughtn't she?"

"I think it best for Hecla to go, Hetty."

"Thank you, Harmony," Hecla said gratefully. "You are the only counselor who has not tried to oppose me in doing my duty. Richard ought to have known me better than to believe anything would keep me from his bedside!"

"For Jervis' sake, Hecla," Wentworth said.

She had the child in her arms and was passionately kissing him. For a moment she hesitated, then she answered quietly: "No, Wentworth, even Jervis must not hold me back."

"Let Jervis go with you, Sister Hecla," Little Pitcher broke in. "He will read his *History of England* to brother Richard and make him well."

"No, Jervis, brother Richard is too ill for that. You must wait until he grows better."

Wentworth accompanied his cousin on the drive to Snow Shoe. Little was said on the long journey. Hecla, muffled in fur, her veil drawn over her face, sat apart from him gazing moodily out of the window. It was a bleak November day, cloud-obscured, and with gusts of wind that tore off the few leathery leaves still clinging to the tree branches. Wentworth, glancing at Hecla, saw how wretched she was and how little fit to bear the

strain of nursing her husband; but he made no further remonstrance, knowing how useless it would be.

Hecla had not seen her husband since she had parted with him on the gray cricket-filled eve he had come to Burnham. The news received that morning had been an inexpressible shock, and she was wounded to the quick that her husband should have kept her in ignorance of his illness. Although she still felt the sting of his injustice in reproaching her for marrying him without love, she did not hold herself blameless for their estrangement. She had been so incensed at what she considered Mr. Donovan's unwarrantable interference that she had been guilty of words she had ever since regretted. She had her father's quick temper, but, unlike her father, she seldom lost her control of it. That Richard should have accepted literally her impulsive repudiation of him for not breaking his friendship with Mr. Donovan seemed to her taking cruel advantage of their quarrel.

His unexpected visit had awakened her to a sense of obligations in a measure unfulfilled. She had perhaps weakly put off making the move to Snow Shoe, and she would begin preparations at once to leave Burnham. As for Mr. Donovan, she said to herself she could never pardon him for the trouble he had caused her. First, he had insulted her father, then occasioned the misunderstanding between Harmony and herself, and finally he had endeavored to fill the place she now remorsefully realized she had left vacant in her husband's isolated life. Yet if she had done so it was not from selfishness, but because the claims of her family had been first with her. All might have been avoided

had Richard only been willing to accept the management of the Works in partnership with David, as she had expected. Then he could have lived at Burnham, and no question of her neglect of him need have arisen. The salve to harassing thoughts was that now she was on her way to her husband's sick bed. She would nurse him devotedly and prove to Dunkirk how wrong it had been in thinking her unwilling to perform a wife's part.

As the carriage neared Snow Shoe objects grew spectral-like seen through the thick air. A forest fire was raging and the smoke made the atmosphere bitter and woody.

The little town was at length reached. The streets were deserted, for most of the inhabitants had gone out into the woods to fight the flames. As they passed along Hecla noticed the new hotel and other improvements of the place, which she knew were largely due to Richard's talent and enterprise.

"Wentworth," she said, "my husband labored for others and success was in his grasp. But he will never live to see his ambitions realized!"

"Don't despair," was Wentworth's answer; "he is a strong man and that means everything in fever."

"Ah, but you forget that he has worn himself out in his work. No one appreciates what heroic sacrifices my husband has made."

Nobody was at the tavern door when they drew up, and Hecla, bidding Wentworth wait below until she summoned him, mounted the stairs to Hallett's rooms. She knocked, and after a minute the door was opened by Mr. Donovan. His face expressed his surprise as

he stood aside for her to enter. Hecla did not offer him her hand as she paused before the closed door leading into her husband's bedroom.

"Mr. Donovan," she controlled her voice with an effort, "I want to thank you for your kindness to my husband. I did not know of his illness until to-day or I should have come at once to relieve you."

"You have come to nurse your husband?" he said.

Her lips tightened a little at the tone in which he spoke, and she answered quickly:

"Does that seem strange to you? You are surprised that a wife should go to her husband's sick bed?"

"I had hardly expected you to risk your life," he replied with bitter candor. "Your husband has had a mild case of typhus and he did not wish you to be subjected to contagion. He begged me to keep you ignorant of his illness as long as possible."

"And you obeyed him. But why should I expect consideration from you? It is enough that I am here now to take your place."

"My place, Mrs. Hallett! You came with the intention of dismissing me? Let me assure you I never should have deserted my friend. I have long been attached to your husband," he added with feeling, "and I owed it to him to look after him in sickness."

"Why should you think that necessary, Mr. Donovan? You seem to forget that he has a wife!"

Hecla's face scarce hid her dislike of this man, who had caused her so much suffering and now interposed himself between Richard and herself.

Mr. Donovan reciprocated her hostile feelings. He suspected her of being the cause of Harmony's renun-

ciation of him, and the bitterness this had provoked in him had increased as he witnessed what he considered her heartless neglect of her husband. How much Hallett had suffered he realized from tending him during his illness.

The smoke of the forest fire had at times made the air of the sick room heavy and difficult to breathe. Seated by his friend's bedside he had listened to his feverish muttering that revealed the love and longing hidden in Hallett's heart. One of the patient's hallucinations was that there was an oppressive perfume about him. His mind had harked back to his arrival at Dunkirk and his encountering Hecla at Christy Pickle's cottage; and it was the night-blooming cereus, the odor of which had floated to him through the open window, that he fancied he now breathed. "How sweet it is!" Donovan heard him moan. "Take it away; I can not endure it! Take it away! No, no, do not take it away! It is Hecla! Come, Hecla, come!" Hallett had told him of their first meeting, and it seemed to the rector there was something symbolic in the fancy that beset the sick man. It was with the sense of all this upon him that he replied:

"If I have forgotten he has a wife, Mrs. Hallett, whose fault is that? But this discussion is unnecessary; your husband left for Philadelphia last night."

Hecla stared incredulously, then she went quickly by him and pushed open the door into Richard's bed-chamber. There was no one there, and from the signs of disorder she could see that Mr. Donovan had been engaged in packing up her husband's belongings. Richard was gone; she faced the rector passionately.

"What is the meaning of this?" she cried. "It is not true, then, that my husband has been ill?"

"He has been ill, Mrs. Hallett," was the reply, "but he had recovered sufficiently to attempt the journey. I thought it most ill-advised in his condition, and did all in my power to prevent his going. But he had made up his mind and would not listen to me."

Hecla did not answer; she was struggling with her bitter disappointment. The bedroom windows fronted the west and the sun was setting, a swollen red ball, in the film of smoke hanging over the wild leagues of mountain landscape. With unseeing eyes she stared at the outer world, bathed in tragic redness like a great shedding of heart's blood. Then, in a fit of weakness, she sank down on the edge of the bed—the lonely bed where so often her husband had lain sleepless—and buried her face in her hands.

She lived over again her last meeting with Richard, from his unexpected coming to the moment when she had cried: "Then I give you up!" On the long journey to Snow Shoe she had thought of what she would say to him in reparation; she had pictured his pleasure at seeing her, his gratitude when he learned that she had come to nurse him. And instead what had she found! An empty room! "How cruel, how cruel!" she murmured.

Mr. Donovan stood watching her with suddenly awakened pity. After all, it was not his right to judge her. Perhaps he had been mistaken, and she loved her husband.

"Mrs. Hallett," he said gently, "I see now that I committed an error in promising your husband not to tell

you of his illness. It was as unkind of me as my words to you a minute ago. My excuse is that I saw how lonely he was and how much he suffered for want of your society. It seemed to me that you were indifferent to him—an unfeeling wife. Forgive me for my uncharitableness, Mrs. Hallett. I know now that I have wronged you.”

“You have not wronged me,” she murmured miserably; “I have wronged myself.”

“I know,” he continued after a pause, “that you dislike me and that you have resented my friendship for your husband. It is true I have given you cause for such feelings. But, believe me, I have never ceased to regret the quarrel with your father. I have a quick temper and I let it get the mastery of me. Mrs. Hallett,” he added, as she did not answer him, “we can not afford to have hate in our hearts. Why mayn’t you and I be friends?”

“I have hated you,” she answered, “that is true. My father was everything to me, and you insulted him. And it was you who told Richard what people said about me!”

“Ah, that was another of my mistakes.”

“Mistakes!” she echoed. “What is life but a series of mistakes!” She raised her head and looked at him with her tragic eyes. Desolation was strong upon her and his face was so full of sympathy and kindness that she was moved impulsively to put out her hand.

“Mr. Donovan,” she said, “I have been unjust to you. I have been thinking only of your unkindness in not telling me of my husband’s illness—I should have remembered that you risked your life to nurse him.”

"It was nothing," he answered. "I did only what any friend would have done."

"It was everything," she returned, "and I thank you." Then, after a moment, she said: "Mr. Donovan, my sister loves you."

"She loved me once, Mrs. Hallett," he replied quietly, "but she loves me no more."

"And you will not try to regain her love?"

Tears came into Hecla's eyes as she looked at him.

"Your sister believes she has found greater happiness than I could ever give her," he said reverently.

On the way home Wentworth, who divined the trouble Hecla hid from him, endeavored to cheer her by talking of trivial things; but Hecla paid little heed. Her eyes stared into the falling darkness where, miles off, was the lurid line of fire that like a serpent roamed the wooded wilderness. High overhead great trees started through the smoke like Juntuns in Niflheim of Scandinavian myth. The carriage, lurching along the road, struck boulders that had gnawed their way to the surface or hung at perilous angles over precipices. Occasionally they were startled by the rustling flight of deer. And once as the carriage passed a rocky ravine the lonely long-drawn cry of a catamount smote their ears.

It was almost midnight when they reached Burnham. The house was muffled in darkness; and no one came to answer the summons of the great brass knocker. Finally Noah went to the rear of the house to rouse the servants, and Hecla, as she waited, leaned wearily against the doorpost. She felt the depression of this

home-coming, with no one up waiting to welcome her. Following upon the experiences of the day it seemed to her a proof that she was unloved by her family, for whom she had sacrificed her husband. David—how much did he care for her? He had never forgiven her for the marriage she had forced him into. Harmony was wrapped up in evangelical missions and Dorcas pieties. And Jervis—grave little Jervis—was he not better content seated by himself at the foot of the stairs, a picture-book on his knee, than when she drew him to her side and talked about his father?

There was the rattling of the chain inside, the bolt was withdrawn, and Noah opened the door for her.

She entered the gloomy hall.

“Is no one awake, Noah?” she cried impatiently.

“Yes, Hecla, I am awake,” she heard the gentle voice of Harmony say from the landing of the stairs, and the next minute she was in her sister’s arms.

“Harmony, Harmony,” she murmured, giving her a tired kiss.

“How is Richard?” Harmony asked as she helped her off with her wraps.

“He is better. He has gone to Philadelphia,” Hecla briefly answered.

“I thought he must be better, for a note in his handwriting came shortly after thee left for Snow Shoe.”

“A note from Richard! Give it to me!”

Hastily taking the letter from Harmony’s hand, she tore it open and read it by the flicker of the hall candles.

Harmony had gone to the dining-room to get her sister something to eat after her trying journey. When

she came back Hecla stood in front of the old Dutch clock, the hands of which still pointed to the hour on which Joshua Sandwith had died, for his daughter had forbidden the works to be wound up again.

“What time is it?” she asked.

Hecla’s face was hidden from her, but Harmony noticed the strangeness of her voice.

“I think midnight has just struck.”

Hecla went up to the dial and altered the hands to the hour of twelve.

Then she turned with a white look to her sister.

“Harmony,” she said, “Richard is dead to me. As long as the clock points to this hour promise me never to mention his name!”

“Hecla,” Harmony asked with quick tears, “what has happened?”

“Richard has deserted me,” Hecla answered; “he has gone back to England.”

And taking her candle she slowly mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER XIII

O, CALL BACK YESTERDAY, BID TIME RETURN

When Hecla fixed the hands of the silent hall-clock at the hour on which she had received the news of Richard's return to England, she considered her husband as dead to her as her own father. She had read the letter like one in a dream, hardly able to credit what it stated. She was stunned at this unexpected act on Richard's part; then quickened into feelings of outrage as she realized that she was a deserted wife. It was the stinging humiliation of this that had driven her to set the clock that it might serve as a perpetual reminder of the hour when Richard Hallett passed out of her life.

As she mounted the stairs she asked herself how Richard could have treated her so heartlessly. He had wished to pain her, revenge himself for her repudiation of him on their last meeting.

Sitting in her room where her unnoticed reflection in the mirror gazed at her like some reproachful ghost, Hecla reread the letter.

Richard wrote that he was going back to England for both their sakes. Their marriage had been a mistake. The only thing he might do to repair the ill that had been wrought was to leave Dunkirk. She need think of him no more. Yet if the time should come when wifely

feelings awakened in her heart she had only to bid him return to her.

Hecla, having finished reading the letter, held it in her lap, while her eyes, fixed on the candle, watched how the wax melted away in golden tears.

She was thinking of what his going meant.

There were cases of marital difficulty in Dunkirk, but no degree of unhappiness had led husband or wife to attempt the solution of their troubles by separation. Convention was too strong a factor in the narrow life of the town and, having taken the vows of wedlock, Hecla's friends and acquaintances accepted whatever fate was theirs. And Richard had abandoned her, had left her to face the criticism and gossip of the town. Oh, it was cruel, cruel of him so to humiliate and disgrace her!

But as the days passed deeper thoughts came to her.

She began to see, as she reflected on her brief life with Richard Hallett, what wrong she had done her husband and herself in marrying him. Recollections crowded upon her. Her mind traveled back over the history of their relations with each other, from their early meetings to the final parting in anger on the ghostly November eve. She recalled his offer of marriage the day he had found her seated disconsolately at the spinet, thinking of Wentworth. She remembered her conversation with her father after he had departed, and his counsel that she marry only for love; the scene between Wentworth and herself, when she had gone to his office and told him of her engagement, and he had begged her not to make a loveless match. She lived over again her wedding night, when she had fled from the

hotel in nameless fear. She considered it all, and saw how everywhere the question of love rose confrontingly.

It was love that Richard had craved and that she had not been able to give him. Hecla could gage how much it represented to him, since it was his sense of having failed to win her heart which had caused him to relinquish his mine and return to England.

Yes, she had done him an irreparable injury in marrying him without love. She had been dominated by a false sense of duty. She had flattered herself that she had been sacrificed; instead she had sacrificed him. She had called him selfish when it was she who had shown herself so. She had demanded everything of him and she had offered nothing in return.

It was given her to see with new and better judgment her past life. She recognized the many mistakes she had made; beheld how, in situations where she believed most firmly she had done what was right, she had signally failed. For, after all, it is not in a cold conception of duty that the best part of life lay, but rather in that warmer, fuller spirit of obligation toward others which is born of love. It is love that is the touchstone and magic of helpfulness; and it was this she had too often forgotten; this was the reason why she had failed to accomplish the good she thought she had sacrificed so much for.

This summing up of her past mistakes was a supreme schooling of character for Hecla. At first it seemed to her that her regrets were more than she could bear; and she rebelled against the inevitable law of circumstance which allowed her so little chance to undo her acts. To recall Richard would be of no avail, for while her ad-

miration for the hidden heroism of his life was growing she recognized that she was unable to offer him love—the only reparation that could count if he returned to her.

During the winter months that elapsed Hecla was ill, but as the spring approached she felt the tides of life flow warmly in her again, and a new budding of interest in things about her. She determined to shape her life, as far as possible, according to the new light that she had discovered. Her resolve was henceforth to dedicate herself to her family in a finer, more human sense. She had reckoned according to the strict standard of duty; now it seemed to her that to give happiness to others was the highest obligation of all. How much better to be indulgent than merely just! Not simply to abide by the cold statutes of human conduct, but to satisfy as best she might the craving of all the world for sympathy and understanding.

Hecla thought of Harmony, so quiet and unassuming, so involuntarily good, without reasoning effort, and she contrasted her with herself and her own intellectual processes in the matter of character and conduct. Changed and greatly softened, made to view life with different eyes, Hecla revalued Harmony and placed her in a scale which she had denied her in the past. Her half-sister's Christian sweetness she had rather despised; she saw now that it was this sweetness which her own character had most lacked, and her affection for Harmony in consequence increased.

Hecla did not regret the impulse which had led her, from misery at finding her husband gone, to accept John Donovan's sympathy and friendship. She won-

dered now how she could have so fostered the bitter dislike she had felt for him. The rector had been the cause of her misunderstanding with both Harmony and her husband; yet he was Richard's friend and had proved his devotion to him by nursing him at the risk of his own life. It became her great desire to show him that she could rise above old emotions of jealousy and hate, and prove her appreciation of his kindness to Richard. Therefore, when they next met she asked him to the house, and as she grew to know his character she was as anxious to have him and Harmony marry as formerly she had opposed their love.

She was grateful to the young rector for his silence on the subject of Richard's departure for England. How much he knew of the reasons that caused her husband to leave her she was unaware; but no gossip ever reached her ears springing from information he had given others; and Hecla could easily imagine how often he had been asked questions on the subject, since he was Richard's close friend.

Indeed, it was largely owing to the tactfulness of John Donovan and the Markhams that the alienation between her husband and herself did not become a confirmed scandal on Dunkirk doorsteps. Mr. Markham, who had gone to Philadelphia to bring back the Welsh miners hired by Richard, spoke to Hecla on his return of having seen her husband before his sailing. He had stood the journey to Philadelphia better, Mr. Markham told her, than was to be expected in the case of one hardly more than feebly convalescent. The long sea-trip was what Richard needed to recover his strength. Mr. Markham made no reference to the length of her

husband's stay in England, but Hecla learned that while in Philadelphia a new manager of the mine had been engaged by him.

For once Hetty did her cousin a good turn by circulating the rumor through the town that Richard Hallett had returned to England to claim a large fortune left him by a distant relative. Triumphant as Hetty was over the apparent proof of her wisdom in deprecating Hecla's marriage to a "strange Englishman," she reserved her expression of this feeling for the family ears alone. She was fond of Hecla in her own way, and, as she declared, had no intention of giving Pinkie Tathem and other malicious Dunkirk tongues an opportunity to wag at the expense of a Sandwith.

So it finally became an accepted fact that, after all, there had been no quarrel between Hecla and her husband, but that Richard Hallett's sudden departure to England was due to important business reasons.

One day when Wentworth came out to Burnham to see Hecla, he met Mr. Donovan leaving the house. He was not surprised at this, for he knew something of Hecla's change of feeling toward the man she had once so violently disliked.

As they were sitting together in the parlors, he said to Hecla: "Doesn't it seem a pity that Harmony and Donovan do not marry? You would like it, wouldn't you?"

"I would indeed, Wentworth," Hecla answered. "I wish the marriage, hope for it, although Harmony believes that she is dedicated to good works. But making those who love us happy is, after all, the best of works, isn't it? Ah, Wentworth, duty! duty! that was the word

always on my lips; duty at the expense often of natural, kinder ways of looking at things; duty, no matter what had to be sacrificed. I have lived so much in the last two years since I came back from school, a raw, hard, self-assured girl! I am glad that if I have grown sadder I have also grown wiser; and I have come to understand what duty really is! It is the sympathy, affection, we owe others; not the good we plan to do with the head alone. Ah, Wentworth, my mistakes, my mistakes in life! I am no longer what I was, for experience has so humbled me! Yes," she added after a moment, "I do earnestly wish Mr. Donovan could win Harmony. I have come to see how wrong it was of me to oppose their love; and you know it means a great deal for me to forget that old antipathy of mine."

"It was a mistake, Hecla; but your affection for your father blinded you. Donovan is very much liked and respected."

"It was more than a mistake, it was a crime, Wentworth; and I never cease to reproach myself. Harmony would have married him if I had not interfered. We always mistook Harmony, Wentworth. We thought her weak, and she is as strong as she is good."

"Hecla, you are greatly changed!"

"No, Wentworth, I am not changed. Do you think our character ever really changes? We are what we are! Only I think that I had no heart,—as so many people believed."

"I never thought it, Hecla!"

"Ah, you have always been good and patient with me." Tears started to her eyes. "And it is I who have hurt your life. It is my fault you are not happily mar-

ried. Your mother wanted you to win Rhoda Markham for your wife. Rhoda cares for you, Wentworth; I know it, although she tries to hide it from me. Sometimes," she said after a pause, "I feel that it was decreed from the beginning I should be an element of ill in the lives of those around me. Think, Wentworth, it is I who was the cause of my father's death!"

"You are too hard on yourself," he answered. "You have never injured me. It was not your fault that I loved you—that I love you still!"

"Wentworth," she said, putting out her hand to him, "I loved you once, too. If I had my life to live over again I should never have refused your love. I do not say it would have been right of me, but as I feel now I know I should not have allowed duty to weigh. Do you understand me? The greatest tragedy to me is that I have never made any one happy. It is too late—too late! No matter, even if I were free—for my love for you died when Richard left."

"Hecla," he said gently, "it is my reward to know that at least you loved me once."

"Ah, Wentworth, don't think of me any more that way. It makes my heart ache so. Let me have the peace of feeling that though I have hurt your past I shall not make your future unhappy!"

There was silence for a while, then Wentworth said:

"Hecla, you do not know it, but you have grown to love your husband. Why don't you ask him to come back to you?"

"No, no," she answered, turning from him. "I shall never bid him come back to me. Our marriage was a

mistake. I wasn't the kind of woman to make him happy. No, things are better as they are."

"Are you certain, Hecla? I don't believe that your husband thinks so."

"He thought it, Wentworth, or he never would have left me!" she answered. "Do not try to persuade me to commit another mistake by asking him to return."

CHAPTER XIV

SOUR MISFORTUNE'S BOOK

It was a summer afternoon in the year following Richard Hallett's departure for England. Hecla was on her way to Dunkirk, to take tea with her cousin Hetty. She walked languidly and it was with a certain sensitive dignity that she received the passing greetings of friends and acquaintances. There was something peculiar in these bows of recognition, as if in each case an effort was made to conceal and at the same time show Hecla sympathy.

Hecla knew that the cause of these embarrassed greetings was the failure of her father's furnace. The crisis had finally come. Wentworth had refused to consent to the mortgage being placed on the property, and Hecla, desperate over her husband's refusal to enter into partnership with Dave, had been persuaded by her brother to indorse several large notes for him by which he was able to tide over his immediate difficulties. She had steadily refused to agree to the sale of the Works, saying that it would never have been her father's wish that she should do so. The result was that a new lease for another year was given Dave.

Thus, for the next few months, he struggled on, manufacturing iron, the market price of which had

risen a little, but was still discouragingly low. At length Dave was obliged to confess that he was so pressed by his creditors that he could no longer carry on the business.

It was decided therefore in a final interview between Dave, Hecla and Wentworth, that the only thing left to do was to put the furnace at auction, and thus meet the obligations which Hecla had partly assumed by indorsing David's notes.

The depression of the times did not favor an advantageous disposal of the property; and weeks passed without any adequate offers being made.

Hecla, as she walked along the streets of Dunkirk, saw the bills announcing the sale pasted on posts and tree-trunks. It seemed to her, as she gazed at them, that this public testimony to the ruin of the family would never end.

It had taken some courage to come to town; but Hetty and her husband were leaving for a grand European tour and Hecla wished to bid them farewell.

Hetty's marriage to Blair Nandine had occurred that spring, and had been her final defiance of her Uncle Gideon Sandwith and Quaker faith. She had already satisfied her long-restricted taste for gay wearing apparel by appearing in costumes and jewels which had created a sensation in Dunkirk circles. Declaring that her guardian had driven her out of Meeting, she started on a checkered religious career, attaching herself, in turn, to the various Christian bodies, and finding in each case some cause of dissatisfaction. There was, she declared, too much ritual at the Little Church on the Hill, to which her husband belonged; and she found

Presbyterianism depressing on account of the long sermons and the lugubrious psalm-singing; and so she wandered restlessly from one church to another, dragging her husband with her. Having exhausted the resources of Dunkirk, Hetty decided she must see the world, especially Paris, which offered the long-dreamed-of delights of shopping.

Hecla found Blair Nandine standing disconsolately on the doorstep of his home, smoking a cigar. Hetty forbade smoking in the house. He had ceased to recite Shakespeare and write sonnets; for Hetty detested poetry. He was no longer the spruce young dandy he had been in his bachelor days, for Hetty did not approve of extravagance in a husband. If money was to be expended on dress it was her place to spend it. Blair had had his fling in fine array, while she had the arrears of a whole lifetime to make up.

"Hetty has been closeted with Wentworth Oliver the last two days," he informed Hecla in a mournful voice. "She's making her will. And she's worried over Clio,"—Clio was Hetty's lap-dog—"who is so fat from over-feeding he can hardly draw his breath. I sometimes think, Hecla, that Hetty cares more for that dog than she does for me."

Hetty was in an upper room seated among heaps of linen, piles of silver, and a scattering of other chattels. She was counting these over before returning them to their well-locked closets and coffers, where they reposed, except when Hetty gave one of her rare tea-parties intended to impress Dunkirk by their splendor.

"I have been putting things in order, Hecla," she announced, "in case I'm drowned in mid-ocean. I know

how delighted Dunkirk would be to discover a higgledy-piggledy house to talk about after I'm dead! Yes, as Blair probably told thee—you, I mean"—Hetty was still struggling to overcome her habit of using the plain language—"I have been making my will. I suppose you'd like to know whether I have put thee—put you down for enough to make you wish that the ship'll sink crossing the Atlantic. There's the portrait of John Jervis and the silver tankard you always begrudged me. If you'd not been so envious of my having them I might have left them to thee—to you (I do wonder if I'll *ever* break myself of the thee-and-thou habit!) but you have John Jervis' ears—Blair called them 'twin brier roses,' didn't he?—so the rest of his fine legacies ought to go to some other member of the family."

Hetty picked up a coffee-urn—it was one of a half-dozen or more she had, for the tradition of keeping was strong in her blood—and considered it doubtfully:

"Well, there's this old coffee-pot. I haven't mentioned it in the will as it is only plated ware. Thee and the rest of the family may fight over it if you want to. I am sorry about the Works, Hecla, although I do think half the failure came about because Dave married a girl beneath him. When I finally decided to take Blair I made him promise in writing he would give up his common relatives. To think of the furnace being up for sale! Benjamin Truelove ought to feel quite proud the way his prediction has come true. I am really sorry for you, Hecla. I wish I could do something or other."

"There is nothing you can do, Hetty, except not to say unkind things of my brother."

Hetty knit her brow in thought. "Of course, I can't

help feeling poor with Blair to support and losing all of Uncle Gideon's money in the bargain; but there are some of my old dresses, Hecla, if you care for them. I hardly think I'll want them, for I shall buy a good many things in Paris."

"Thank you, Hetty, but I have all the dresses I need."

"Well, help me put these things away, it's getting near tea-time. I have had such a trying week deciding about my will. Of course, Blair has nothing to say, seeing the house and everything in it is mine. I told him when I married him I should manage my property myself. I felt a little worried when he said, 'With all thy worldly goods I me endow' in the marriage service, but he swore it was only a slip of the tongue, and he has shown the right spirit so far, so we get on quite well. Considering everything, I am right glad I married him. It was certainly convenient after my quarrel with Uncle Gideon. Of course, there's a great deal of expense goes with the wedding ring, but I never could see the world satisfactorily if I traveled single. And I must admit Blair's been pretty economical since I had a little talk with him about extravagance."

Supper was over and Hecla and her cousin were sitting in the parlor. Blair Nandine had gone out, glad to escape for a while Hetty's volubility on the subject of her lap-dog's and her own ills. Hetty was deep in a description of Clio's last attack of asthma when her husband reappeared with an air of importance.

"Hecla," he said, "I have news for you! The Works have been sold at last!"

"Are you sure?" Hecla said faintly.

"Yes, Mr. Markham has bought them."

"So Mr. Markham has bought my father's Works!" She stared in front of her unseeingly. She had been waiting for this announcement, hoping that it would come soon and thus end the strain under which she labored; yet now that Hecla Furnace was actually sold the news was like a stab in the heart.

"There is quite a good deal of excitement over the sale. I strolled down to the Red Lion, and found a crowd there hurrahing for Mr. Markham."

"Why should there be any hurrahing?" Hecla sadly questioned.

"Why, because the Works' being shut down has made such a difference to the tradespeople. Mr. Markham sent for Wentworth to come out to Moshannon Hall yesterday to discuss the matter, but the news of the sale only got abroad this evening. They are both coming to Dunkirk to-night and the crowd's preparing to welcome them."

"Well, I hate to think of Wentworth Oliver's selling his uncle's furnace," Hetty exclaimed in her high treble.

"I don't see why, Hetty," Hecla said. "He is doing it for my sake. Dave and I are both anxious that the creditors lose nothing through the failure."

"Music!" Blair Nandine informed them. "Mr. Markham and Wentworth have evidently arrived, and they are having a parade in their honor."

The sounds grew louder, and now they could catch the familiar strains of *See, the Conquering Hero Comes*, discordantly breathed forth by Dunkirk's band corps. The musicians came marching down the street in ad-

vance of an open vehicle that contained Mr. Markham, Wentworth and the burgess of the town. Following this were several other carriages, in which prominent merchants were seated, and surrounding them a crowd of eager citizens bearing torches and making a joyous uproar, above which the name of Mr. Markham shot like a Fourth-of-July rocket.

"The king is dead, long live the king!" Blair Nandine quoted as he stood at the window.

Hecla had listened to the music with bitter immobility; but Hetty impetuously sprang from her seat and looked over her husband's shoulders. Seeing that the procession was going to pass her door she cried in shrill command: "Blow out the candles, quick!" Then she disappeared to see that the other lights in the house were extinguished. Blair Nandine was meekly obeying his wife's orders when Hetty, irritated by his slowness, pushed him aside with impatient exclamation and finished the task herself. Then she drew down the blinds. "There!" she ejaculated breathlessly.

She was none too soon. The next moment they heard the tramp of feet and shouts of the torch-bearers as the procession went by. It seemed to Hecla as it did so the music burst into louder strains and the crowd used their lungs to greater effect in shouting out their satisfaction that Hecla Furnace had found a new master.

"Hetty, how could you act so?" she said as the sounds faded. "You know it only gives the town more pleasure to think we feel badly."

"I don't care," Hetty retorted, still breathing hard from her exertion, "I showed Dunkirk people what I

thought of their conduct—the ungrateful turncoats! To make a jubilation over Mr. Markham's buying the Works, after thy father buttered their bread for half a century! Fancy Wentworth allowing himself to be dragged in a carriage past my doors!"

"I am sure neither Wentworth nor Mr. Markham wished to be dragged in a carriage past your doors, Hetty! They probably had to submit. I am grateful to Wentworth for making the sale."

"Wentworth needn't have submitted. He never did have any strength of character! One thing is certain, I shan't pay him for drawing up my will!" Tears of indignation started to Hetty's eyes. "I don't know why," she sobbed, "but I feel as though there had been a death in the family. To think the old furnace should have come into the hands of strangers, and the whole town hurrah in our very faces!"

"It's not very often you are sorry about anything, Hetty."

"Well, I think thee's very mean to say so! I didn't intend telling thee, but I have left thee all my money. I suppose now thee'll hope I'll drown crossing the ocean, but I won't, just to spite thee!"

Dave had stopped in to accompany Hecla back to Burnham. As they walked home Hecla kept affectionate hold of her brother's arm. She forgot her own grief in sympathy for him. He had been drinking, and it gave Hecla a pang to think that Dave should have resorted to so ignoble a means of bearing family reverses. When he had entered Hetty's parlor that evening she had been struck for the first time with the coarsened look on his face and how careless he had grown about

his clothes. She reproached herself as she reflected on these changes in her brother. Had she tried to help him in the wisest way? Life had so deepened in her of late that she saw her past actions in a different light. Why had she exercised her power over him to bring about his marriage with Clover, when she might have won him by kinder, more sisterly persuasions?

"Don't despair, Dave," she said to him. "I know what a bitter blow all this has been, but remember you're young and strong. You have your life before you still. Promise me you won't give up!"

"It's easy for you to say not to give up," he answered sullenly. "What chance have I ever had, with everybody down on me? It was enough to discourage one the way father acted, putting you and Wentworth over me. If one's own family has no faith in you how can you expect other people to have any?"

"I always believed in you, Dave!"

"If you did, then why did you try to get that conceited husband of yours to take charge of the furnace?"

"Dave, please speak of Richard with more respect!"

"Well, I'd hardly stand up for him, considering you're his wife only in name!"

"Why must you remind me of that? Have you no kindness, David, no gentlemanliness?"

She bit her lips to keep back the tears. What cruel things her brother could say! Yet was there not enough trouble to-night without quarreling?

"You're not hurt?" he asked in rough amends. "I didn't suppose you cared that much for him!"

Didn't care! Yet why should she blame her brother, when she was only beginning to realize how much her

heart craved the tenderness and consideration Richard had shown her in their one brief year of wedded life? What had she not borne since he left her? The crushing defeat of her hopes in the failure and sale of Hecla Furnace; the patronizing pity of the world over her troubles; and Hetty's unfeeling remarks and the offer of her old dresses,—how that had wounded her! And then had followed the triumphal procession of the new iron-master, with torches, shouts and music as though fate wished her to taste the very dregs of humiliation and misery.

"You were speaking of my not giving up," Dave went on. "I have a plan in my head which I'm positive will make my fortune if you help me out."

"You know I am ready to do anything I can for you, Dave!" Hecla spoke eagerly. She was depressed about her brother's future, and it cheered her that he was already thinking of new ways and means to support himself.

"There is a big need of a planing-mill in Dunkirk, and I was thinking, Hecla, if you'd invest some capital in the scheme we might put one up on the old place. The meadow stream will provide the necessary power; we can dam that up. And the black walnuts'll bring a good price if we cut them down."

Hecla stopped short at Dave's proposition, too amazed for a moment to protest. "Dam up the stream, cut down the grove, and spoil Burnham!" she exclaimed. "Why, David, have you no love for your old home?"

"You just said you'd do anything you could for me," he sneered, "and now when you are put to the test you cry out! The planing-mill will be a splendid

thing that can't help benefiting your pocket and Jervis'. It's what Dunkirk needs. I spoke of the scheme to some business men and they highly approved of it."

"But, Dave, it is my home. How can you even speak of it?"

Yet she listened as he went on talking of the new venture and the fortune there was in it for the family.

They reached the top of the hill, where the path led over the meadow to the house. The moon, swimming in the deep summer night, poured down its beams on the wandering brook, changing it into murmuring quicksilver; and beyond this, hiding the house, was the stately walnut grove wrapped in dreamful shadow. It was a scene of peaceful beauty, and Hecla, as she filled her eyes with the sight, felt herself choke at the thought of this supreme sacrifice Dave demanded of her.

"Dave," she faltered, "I can't discuss this any more to-night. I must think about it. But believe that I shall do all I can justly to help you. You will come in a while?"

"No, Clover is expecting me home early."

Hecla retained her brother's hand. "I wish," she said, "that you and Clover would come and live with me, now that the old Forge house is gone with the rest of the property. As long as Jervis and I have a roof over our heads," she continued sadly, "it is yours to share with us."

"Clover wouldn't agree to it, Hecla."

"But, Dave, why can you not persuade her? Tell her how welcome she'd be. Good-by! Don't come any farther, I am not afraid. And—and I shall think over what you propose."

They parted, and Hecla went slowly across the moon-blurred meadow, hearing the sharp little cries of the katydids in the dew-wet grass. She walked wearily, looking about her, noting a hundred familiar things. And when she reached the graveled driveway leading through the grove, with quick passion she flung her arms around one of the faithful old guardians of the house, and putting her lips against the rough bark, kissed it once and once again.

Had life no pity on her? Was she to drink to the bitter lees the cup of punishment for the wrong she had done her husband? Her father's furnace, the cause of her first misunderstanding with Richard, had passed out of her hands. And now Burnham, which had been her father's pride, the home she had clung to when her husband had bidden her come to him, was she to live to see its ruin? Was this sacrifice to be part of her penance for her failure to give happiness to the man she had married and lost?

CHAPTER XV

THE VINEYARD OF NABOTH

Hecla was on her way to Dunkirk one Wednesday morning, when she met her Uncle Gideon Sandwith.

She had not seen him to speak to since his estrangement with Hetty, and she was a good deal surprised that he greeted her apparently without resentment for her share in the quarrel. Gideon Sandwith was considerably altered in looks, and she wondered as she perceived how he had aged whether he missed his niece and regretted the misunderstanding that had caused her to desert his home.

He informed her that he had been confined to bed for a month with rheumatism and that he had left the house for the first time that morning to attend Meeting.

"Thee is not going?" he asked.

"No," she replied indifferently. "I am on my way to Wentworth's office."

"Thee never was a Friend at heart, Hecla," he said rebukingly, "and I have heard thy husband is a free-thinker. It is well that he and thee are parted."

"My husband is a better man than many who profess religion, Uncle Gideon," she returned quickly. "As for me, it is true: I never was good like Harmony."

She saw his face harden at the mention of Harmony's name.

"David still owes me money," he said harshly. "I have not pressed him, but now the Works are sold I hope he will pay me."

"David will pay all his debts," Hecla proudly answered.

She looked after him curiously as he passed on, leaning upon his ivory-topped cane, and she asked herself what happiness the sick old man found in his wealth now he had forced Hetty, the only element of youth and brightness there had been in his life, from his doors. Hecla saw him turn up the Meeting House path and she could not help thinking that religion came near to being a mockery in Gideon Sandwith's case. And he had spoken of her husband disparagingly as an atheist!

Gideon Sandwith, on reaching the little gray Meeting House, took his accustomed seat. He waited some time in expectation of other arrivals, but no one came. There was dust on the benches, telling of the janitor's neglect. The stoves had not been lighted and the damp weather touched his thin blood. But he sat on, with his hands clasped, his thumbs mechanically lapping each other alternately, and his face fixed in its habitual hard angles.

At last the door was pushed open and in the yellow square of light that fell on the inner gloom he saw the slight figure of Harmony silently enter. Seating herself on the bench on the women's side, where she always sat, she closed her eyes in prayerful meditation.

Harmony had sought the peaceful Meeting House this Fourth Day morning, because her heart was troubled.

During the months following the departure of Richard Hallett from Dunkirk Hecla had never ceased to speak praisingly of John Donovan as a man she had misjudged and now respected highly. The young rector himself had never referred to their old relationship, but Harmony's instinct told her how devotedly he still loved her. She feared that she was weakening in her spirit of sacrifice and tried to find renewal of strength in silent communion with God in the little Meeting House, where the words of Benjamin Truelove had so moved her. A resolve had been forming in her bosom and she had come to-day to see if it would receive anointment of Heaven. It was on an altar not built with hands that she would offer again the gift of sacrificed earthly love.

As the hour slowly passed in silence Gideon Sandwith glanced furtively at her from under his heavy brows; but Harmony was unconscious of his looks and the hatred that darkened them. She was a picture of purity as she sat on in the holy quiet. She was dressed in gray, and her delicate hands were folded meekly on her lap; her pale, earnest face was half-hidden within the oval of her plain bonnet, which was the badge of her renunciation of the world—the cross her uncle had so cruelly pressed on her shrinking young shoulders.

The membership of the Meeting had yearly grown less and Gideon Sandwith was aware that to the last worshiper the property would fall. He knew also how valuable it was in the eyes of the trustees of the Academy standing on the hill behind; with what willingness a high price would be paid that recess grounds might be secured for Dunkirk youth with bat and ball.

Gideon had on several occasions been approached on the subject of a purchase of at least part of the grounds surrounding the Meeting House. Without analyzing his reason for doing so, Gideon Sandwith, as he sat on the elders' bench on First Days and Fourth Days, had begun counting the faces that fronted him. It became a habit to count the faces over and over.

He had beheld worshiper after worshiper disappear. His brother Joshua had died; then Pentecost was carried to the old Sandwith burying-ground on the top of the pine-shaded hill overlooking Dunkirk. On his decease his wife Deborah had returned to her Philadelphia home. Such outsiders as had occasionally been attracted to the Meeting had gradually abandoned the practice of coming.

And now only Harmony and himself were left.

Gideon never admitted to his conscience that he coveted the old Sandwith Meeting House; never acknowledged that it was as Naboth's vineyard to him. When he opposed Harmony's membership he had told himself it was from the highest of motives; that she was unfit to embrace Quakerism. He had felt toward her application as he had toward others he had discouraged.

But Harmony had become a Friend in spite of his counsel, and as he glanced at her pure, prayerful face thwarted greed bit his heart like acid.

At last the hour lapsed and Harmony rose from her seat. Her face shone with the light of new Christian resolve. For a moment she looked hesitatingly at the stern hard figure on the elders' bench then she approached shyly.

"Uncle Gideon," she said, "I wish to bid thee fare-

well. I have decided to leave Dunkirk and make my home in Philadelphia with Aunt Deborah."

"Thee gives up thy membership in the Meeting here, then?"

"There is no Meeting any more," she answered a little sadly. "Thee and I are all that are left now. Yes, I shall join the Twelfth Street Meeting that Aunt Deborah attends."

"Fare thee well," he muttered in his harsh voice, "and God be with thee."

As Harmony reached the Meeting House door she paused and looked around her. Her eyes dwelt lingeringly on the rows of unpainted deal benches, with their scattered cushions of sage-colored *moire antique*; on the old goblet-shaped wood stoves, with their crooked pipes; on the unpapered walls of refreshing whiteness. The light, coming through the slats of the half-rolled-up green Venetian shades, gave a holy sweetness to everything; and to all that she gazed on Harmony bade a long farewell with aching heart. What a refuge the little Meeting House had been in times of trouble; what a harbor of calm from spiritual storms! She was going away from the scenes of her girlhood. When she returned would not the hoary old mountain pines be spreading their wings of peace over a deserted house of worship?

Gideon remained where she had left him, a stern figure in the half-gloom of the empty building. So the property was his at last—the property for which he had waited half a century! Harmony was gone like the many others he had sat out since the passion to possess

this little monument of family faith had first taken root and waxed strong in his heart.

How many had there been?

Gideon Sandwith began counting the faces he had watched through the long years; and as he did so his square hard thumbs lapping each other alternately kept tally. He counted them over once, then again, and still again; and as he counted he seemed to see them faintly in their accustomed places. There was Hannah Sandwith, his aged mother, who had ridden up to the wilderness of central Pennsylvania in her seventieth year to settle there with her sons; there was his gentle Cousin Isaac, wrapped in his soft Shetland shawl and slowly passing his hand over his long white lock of hair; there was Joshua, Pentecost, Deborah—

He saw them all more and more distinctly as he counted, lapping one hard square thumb over the other in his accustomed machine-like way: Hannah Sandwith, his aged mother, his Cousin Isaac, Joshua, Pentecost, Deborah, Harmony—

There they sat in their places gazing at him, gazing reproachfully, accusingly. From one face to another his eyes wandered, and at last he could bear their look no more; and he bowed his head in his hands.

And Gideon Sandwith knew that they would be sitting there always as they sat there now, the worshipers that had returned to forbid the desecration of the old Meeting House, to interpose themselves between him and his miser's greed.

At last he raised his eyes and behind the row of misty faces he saw darkening the square of light that came

through the doorway the figure of Benjamin Truelove. He was standing there on the threshold with one hand raised, like Nathan before David.

And Gideon Sandwith heard in the silence the accusing words:

“Thou art the man!”

CHAPTER XVI

PAST ALL DISHONOR

When Harmony told Hecla of her determination to leave Dunkirk and live in Philadelphia with her Aunt Deborah, Hecla had said nothing to dissuade her. Anxious as she now was to have her sister wed Mr. Donovan, she recognized how sincerely Harmony was following the dictates of her conscience in going away. Still it was a deep disappointment to her that she was unable to repair the wrong she had done the rector's love by so bitterly opposing his early intimacy with Harmony. It not only weighed on her heart, but oppressed her with a sense of life's sternness. Were one's acts so irrevocable? she asked herself. Was one compelled to watch the evil seed sprout, wax into a tree and bear fruit without checking the fatal growth? Looking back upon the past it seemed to Hecla that her life had been one tissue of mistakes; that she had been destined to wreck the happiness of every one about her. Yet in all she had done she had been governed by what she believed to be high principles and the pointings of duty.

She had separated Harmony and Mr. Donovan; she had coerced Dave into a marriage that had helped to drag him down; she had caused her husband to abandon

his ambitions on the eve of success; and Wentworth—had it not been for her, he might have married and been happy! As Hecla pondered these things she lost all confidence in her own strength and began to yearn as she had never done since the tragic death of her mother for the consolation and support Harmony found in religion.

With Harmony's departure for Philadelphia Hecla was left at Burnham with only Jervis. She had hoped that Dave would make his home with her, as she had urged him to do, but Clover, who had always shown her independence of her husband's family, thinking that they disapproved of her, could not be persuaded to agree to the arrangement. Hecla felt keenly her loneliness, but she resolutely hid it from others out of pride and the half-conviction that she merited such deserts of fortune.

Dave had continued to urge his sister to consent to the scheme of putting up a planing-mill at Burnham; and Hecla, after consulting Wentworth, who could not but approve of what business men in Dunkirk considered a promising undertaking, made up her mind to the sacrifice of her home. She told herself if she must choose between two ills it was better to have Burnham ruined rather than David. She recognized that her brother's complaints on the way home from Hetty's were not unreasonable; it was what she had often herself felt regarding Dave, and it had been her strongest motive in upholding him against the aspersions cast upon his ability by his relatives. He was without means, for he had honorably, she proudly remembered, sold his farm to satisfy his debtors. The failure of the Works

had bitterly discouraged him, and it was her place to revive his confidence in himself by showing her faith in him and his new ventures. And in making the painful sacrifice she determined that neither David nor any one else should know how much it cost her.

Her suffering proved, however, to be almost more than she could bear because of this stoic silence when the time came to hew down the beloved walnut grove. Still, kindly sympathy with her was not wanting. Wentworth did what he could to brighten her. Lucia besought her to live with her during the building of the dam, and Rhoda Markham likewise invited her to make her a long visit at Moshannon Hall. But to these and other offers Hecla returned answer that she would not leave Burnham; that it would ever be home to her, no matter what changes came to it.

The work took several slowly-passing months, though Dave endeavored to hasten it on. When the ax was laid to the first tree Hecla's heart well-nigh failed her. She tried to interest herself in household employ. She read to Jervis. She played on her neglected spinet and sang the old ballads her father had loved. But nothing could distract her mind from what was taking place outside the house. The echo of the chopping reached her ears as she wandered restlessly from room to room; and each time one of the giant bodies crashed to ground it seemed to fall crushingly across her heart. She could not bear to look upon her old friends who seemed to stretch out their great arms toward her praying for mercy. She knew them all, loving them for their greatness of girth or for the grave beauty of their spreading boughs; and now they were doomed to death she felt it like a human

loss. As they fell one by one, like scarred old veterans on a battle-field, they seemed to leave her citadel bare to the world. Benjamin Truelove's prophecy that had been haunting her ears of late with solemn insistence seemed now indeed fulfilled. Her father's furnace was in stranger hands; Burnham stood stripped and beggared of what had been its pride and beauty. Hecla was glad that her father had not lived to behold the ruin of his home and the gradual wasting away of the ample fortune he had bequeathed his children.

Walking down the garden paths Hecla saw the scattered nests of the doves that had returned innumerable springtimes to their lodging in the walnut limbs. The flying squirrels so often watched as they dropped like autumn leaves from the branches in the moonlight, routed from their holes by the noise of ax and scream of saw, fled in alarm, chattering execrations on their invaders. The voice of the garden rose in lament and protest at the sacrilege that was being done until Hecla almost felt blood-guiltiness on her conscience.

The building of the dam was a slower tragedy. Some fear had been expressed among the townsfolk of danger to Dunkirk through such a body of water being dammed up in such close proximity, and David had met this sentiment by vowing he would build the breastworks so strong and wide a team of oxen could be driven over it.

The forge-folk took great interest in the new enterprise; and Mog Pickle, Joe the jigger-boss and others came out to watch the dam being constructed.

One day Hecla, passing by where the work was going on, saw Solomon Stitch gazing at the scene and shaking his head in his old lugubrious fashion.

“Man is born unto trouble, Miss Heckly, ez the Good Book sez,” he remarked in accents nasal as an accordion, “but Ah hadn’t thott to see Joshua’s seed a-feelen’ the Lord’s hand so heavy upon ’em. The Big House hain’t looken’ much like it useter. Joshua was mighty sott on his home.”

“It is changed, Solomon,” Hecla answered bravely, “but I love it just as much as ever.”

“Wall, it’s a true word o’ Holy Writ, ain’t it, thet *Many wotters kin not quench love; neither kin the floods drown it?* Dave hez put up a fust-rate farbric and folks needn’t hev no fear of it busten’. Thet is, ef no un don’t drop no live silver in the dam out a spite.”

It was an old superstition of the county that a little quicksilver was a powerful agent in eating away a dam and it was a favorite means of gratifying a “grudge” to employ it secretly to that end.

David found it convenient to stay at Burnham during the building of the dam, as he and Clover had not yet moved in town from the farm. His presence in the house was Hecla’s consolation at this painful time, for it was long since she had seen so much of her brother. It was like the old days of affectionate intimacy before Hecla had left for boarding-school and Dave had leased his father’s furnace and taken up his abode at Mrs. Littlepage’s. It pleased her that he fell quickly into the habit of calling Burnham home, and she labored to have him enjoy every comfort within her power to give while he was under her roof. She ordered his favorite dishes to be prepared and showed him a hundred small proofs of her sisterly thoughtfulness. One thing only marred this old-time intercourse with her brother, and this was

the evidence she had of Dave's weakness for drink. She dreaded the nights that he went to town, for on several occasions he had returned intoxicated to a degree that made it necessary for her to call in Hamp to help him to bed. The disappointment in these lapses of her brother on the eve of new enterprises added to her depression, but desperate as she sometimes felt she never completely lost her faith in Dave nor wavered in her devotion. Hecla told herself she would save him and that she would do it—not by exercising harshly her power as when she caused his marriage to Clover, but by redoubling her kindness, by surrounding him with sympathy and love. She never alluded to the nights of anxious waiting; never pleaded with him to reform his habits, well aware how he resented what he called "Hecla's preaching"; but in wiser, tactful ways tried to win him to manlier resolves. And her reward was that Dave's excesses occurred at longer intervals; whereon she took heart, saying that patience would conquer in the end.

The breastworks were finally finished and the stream, checked in its flow, began flooding the meadow, creeping up the sloping grounds toward the house. To every inch of sacred soil thus devoured by the muddy tide Hecla bade farewell. Over more and more of her well-cared-for garden the waters spread, hiding the stumps of the sacrificed trees that stood like monuments to lives forfeited that the family fortune might be retrieved. So changed was everything that Hecla could hardly believe that this was her old home. Only a grudging strip of soil was left by the water-line and to reach this limit took several days.

The making of the dam was a matter of wondering interest to Little Pitcher. To his questions Hecla had given such answers as seemed best calculated to hearten the child. Now as the brown flood crept up, cruelly slow yet cruelly fast, she taxed her memory for tales to tell him, pleasing him by reciting the German legend she had learned at Lititz of the city in the sea, whose magical chiming bells could be heard by fishermen at sunset as they drew in their nets.

It was the third day of the shutting of the gates and the dam was almost filled. For three days Hecla had not seen her brother. He had gone in town after supper saying he would be back early, for there were matters to discuss in connection with the planing-mill and papers to sign. Hecla had vainly waited for him until after midnight. The next day did not bring him nor yet the following night, and Hecla was divided between apprehension and the hope that he had merely gone to the farm. Not wishing to distress Clover if Dave were not after all with her Hecla refrained from sending Hamp to inquire. So she waited, more and more sadly convinced that Dave had again yielded to his weakness for drink—had fallen in with old companions at the Red Lion, tempting him no doubt by proposing to drink a glass to the success of his new business ventures.

Hecla went to bed with a heavy heart. She slept restlessly, starting awake several times from a dream in which she heard the tolling of bells from the bottom of the dam—the memory of the solemn sounds that had fallen on her ear the day of the street-riot mixing with the tales she had told Little Pitcher. Finally, as the day was dawning, she rose from her bed, unable longer to

sleep, and drawn by the fascination we feel for what we most dread to see, she threw open the shutters of her window and looked forth.

The outer world was still drearily leaden-hued—a gray sky brooding over a turbid, mist-hidden bosom of water that now filled the space between the house and the hills beyond.

As Hecla's gaze wandered over the dam she thought of the words Solomon Stitch had quoted: *Many waters can not quench love; neither can the floods drown it.* Yes, changes made no difference; she still loved her home, shorn though it was of its stately beauty. The sacrifice had been in a good cause. It was providing her brother with a new start in life, where he might redeem himself in the eyes of the world.

But would he succeed? Was there any real hope of Dave's ever being different from what he was, and was she destined to see the new planing-mill, for which she had suffered the desecration of her father's home, fail as the Works had failed?

Dave's three days' absence had chilled her confidence, stolen hope from her breast. She looked down on the water veiled in the steaming mists of dawn. There was a breeze stirring, and this, carding the fleece-like fog, changed it into phantom shapes that swayed and circled in slow fantastic measures. A feeling of foreboding grew as she watched—a presentiment that ill destiny had not yet fulfilled itself in her life; that fate still planned to make her suffer.

A spirit of restlessness possessed her, and making a quick toilet, she stole down stairs and opened the heavy front door.

Not more than a stone's throw from the porch spread the turbid, dull-red flood. Under cover of night the stopped-up stream had reached the high-water mark; the dam was full now. The breeze had risen and Hecla felt its dampness on her face. Slowly she walked down to the water's edge. Here and there the current had set and already the ceaseless scour had begun. At Hecla's feet an eddy circled. The clammy and oppressive mist still haunted the dam which ebbed and flowed, breaking on the garden's grassy slope in minute whitecaps. The fresh air from the distant shore swayed the mist aside, opening up a vista. Not far out wind and current played with something—a solider bulk than water—just submerged: an object blurring for a few narrow feet the surface of the dam. The woman's eyes traveling the vista found this, rested on it vaguely. Whatever it was, momentarily it floated closer—an oblong dark shadow groping among the drowned stumps of the sacrificed black walnuts. Hecla noted it curiously. As it drifted in, the scour took hold and the thing circled, slowly, passively. But the shoreward set was stronger than these idling forces. Momentum carried it on. Ten feet farther it went aground. Waves rose and fell. The bulk lay stationary for a while. Then gradually it shifted, and there came into view out of the water a sodden water-logged cloth sleeve bent on a rigid arm. Then a claw-like hand obtruded—the fingers clutching empty air. The current still frolicked with the toy it had found, rolling it about now that it could no longer drive it toward the shore. And so the face was, after a moment, brought to view—the staring face, with the hair matted on the brow, of David!

But Hecla had already guessed. She understood it all; why David had not returned that first night she had waited for him. He had been drinking in town and in crossing the bridge to Burnham made a misstep in the dark and had fallen into the water.

There the body had lain for three days.

And now the dam was delivering it to Hecla.

As she stood transfixed, peering at her brother's dead face, the sun rose redly over the hills scattering the mist.

At the news of her brother's death Harmony returned to Burnham. Hecla's grief had completely prostrated her, and Harmony's office was both that of nurse and comforter.

She confessed to Hecla that the thought of her loneliness had weighed so heavily upon her conscience she had found no peace in her Philadelphia sojourn. "Thee remembers what thee once told me, Hecla; that thee had come to see that the best way of doing one's duty in life was to make other people happy," she said to her. "I recognize how selfish I have been; that I have thought too much of my own salvation, too little of the happiness of those around me." Hecla thought of Harmony's supreme opportunity. "Then, why don't you make Mr. Donovan happy?" she said. "He is still waiting for you!" "Ah, Hecla," was the answer, "that is still my spiritual problem; thee knows if it had not been for John I should never have left thee as I did."

One day Harmony was passing along the road skirting the high stone wall of the Sandwith Meeting House yard when she heard a rich voice reciting the words:

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

There was something so rapt, so moving, in the rhythmic rise and fall of the sentences that Harmony paused and the thought of John Donovan filled her heart with painful sweetness.

There was silence; then she heard the voice again:

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

Harmony went on slowly until she came to the rusty iron wicket that led into the Meeting House ground. It was ajar and Harmony, glancing within, saw pacing under the shadow of the pines a man in Quaker dress whom she recognized as Benjamin Truelove. His face wore a happy smile as he continued:

"Behold thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes—"

Here the young seer's glance fell on the figure of Harmony in her beaver bonnet and gray mantle standing at the half-open wicket.

With an exclamation of joy he came forward and grasping her hands gazed in the girl's chestnut eyes.

"Harmony," he said, his looks radiant as the bridegroom of the Canticles, "the Spirit hath led thee hither."

"Yes," she answered, "it is of the Lord's ordering; I have prayed that thee might come again to Dunkirk. I have had great wish to see thee."

He still held her hands in his and at her words his gaze fed the more ardently on her sweet face.

"Thee knows," she faltered, "it was through thee I was drawn to God and renounced earthly love. But sometimes I feel that spiritual peace can not be purchased at the price of another's happiness."

"Harmony," he said, "thou mayst open thy mind to me without fear. From our first meeting I had a great draught of love for thee, and thou hast been to me ever since like the sweet influences of the evening star. Speak, dear heart."

"Does thee think," she asked him, "that I should do wrong to marry?"

"Nay," he answered, "is it not written, *Marriage is honorable in all?*"

"But," she murmured, "it is also said, *He that is married careth for the things that are of the world.*"

"It is not so of them that are wed in the Lord," the young seer answered. Then as if a vision were given him of his own and Harmony's nuptial happiness, his eyes shone, and he repeated with his golden voice the words of the hundred and twenty-eighth psalm, beginning, *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways.*

Harmony listened with downcast looks and beating heart; and after he had finished she broke the sweet silence by saying:

"There is one thing more I would ask thee. Does thee think a difference of religion should keep us apart?"

"A difference of religion, dear heart?"

"I mean," she shyly said, "that I love one who is not a Friend."

The joyous light in the preacher's face faded. For a while his spirit was too weighed down by Harmony's confession of her love for another to permit of speech. He had come to Dunkirk confident of Harmony's love. Ever since his first meeting with her at Joshua Sandwith's table he had kept her image in his heart. He had been secretly drawn to her then, and every time he had seen her afterward had strengthened the feelings of affection. A few days before, as he meditated upon his love for Harmony, a word had arisen in him which said, "Go, and prevail!" And immediately had he started on the journey to Dunkirk, clothed in all a lover's ardor. But he saw now that he was but an instrument in the Lord's hand to unite Harmony with another; his coming was intended to bring down self—to be a humbling experience. The language that had passed through his mind meant that he was to go to Dunkirk and there prevail over his passion.

"Harmony," he said finally in a gentle voice, "art thou sure of thy lover's feelings for thee?"

"I know that he loves me," she answered simply.

"And thou art sure of thy love for him?"

"Yes," she murmured, "I am sure."

"Then let nothing keep him and thee apart." He drew her hands again to him as he added, "And may the Lord bless you both. Farewell!"

He turned away from her; and Harmony, lingering doubtfully at the wicket, saw him sink on his knees under the shadow of the pines that guarded the Meeting House door.

As Harmony continued on her way she met Empty Ned, who was picking flowers by the roadside and sing-

ing happily. At her greeting he ran forward and offered her his bunch of wild roses.

"Thank thee, Ned," she smiled, "but does thee not want them thyself?"

He shook his head with a laugh. "No, not now. They were for the rector of my church, but you may have them because he likes you!"

"How does thee know that?"

"Because when I take him roses he looks pleased and once he said: 'Ned, roses remind me of some one I love.' I knew who he meant, for didn't he send me out to your house with a letter!"

And Empty Ned clapped his hands at his astuteness.

Harmony gazed at the roses in her clasp. Then she gave them back to him. "Ned," she said, "take the flowers to Mr. Donovan and say I sent them." With a touch of color in her cheeks, she added: "And tell him, Ned, that I wish to see him."

CHAPTER XVII

SPRING PLANTS, AUTUMN GARNERS

An autumn day of the same year had closed in a chilly rain. Hecla was in the sitting-room when Noah entered with the mail. There was only one letter and glancing at it Hecla saw that it was from her sister Harmony.

Shortly after his quiet marriage to Harmony Mr. Donovan had received a call to a western mission. The sisters had felt the break of this parting, but Hecla was too rejoiced at Harmony's final acceptance of her lover to permit herself selfishly to grieve over the increased loneliness that it made in her life.

She broke the seal and read the long account Harmony gave her of her new surroundings and the wide field of Christian labor it offered her. That her sister was happy in wedded life Hecla could not doubt. It escaped from the letter like the fragrance of lavender. John Donovan and she loved each other, and the difference in religious faith was fused and forgotten in that love. While they held to their own individual convictions they walked hand in hand the common path of spiritual aspiration. Hecla read the affectionate postscript over twice; then she folded up the sheet with a slight sigh.

Noah was on his knees before the hearth making a cheerful blaze out of split cedar blocks and broken fir branches.

Hecla, as she watched with what care the old negro built her favorite fire, said to him :

"Noah, don't you know you are doing wrong to stay on here? I can not pay you the wages you deserve."

"Noah ain't thinken' 'bout wages. He's jest mighty obleeged to ye fer letten' him stay right on yere an' look after ye. Didn't ol' marster go loss his life jest case they was tryen' to ketch this nigger an' take him back to Marylan'?"

He laid another fir branch on the crackling logs. Then he rose, and shaking his finger at the golden glow, said : "Mind what I say, fire, an' burn fer missus !"

"Thank you, Noah," Hecla smiled. "I shall forget what a dreary night it is outside with such a wonderful fire to look at."

She took her father's arm-chair, which the negro had pushed near the fender, and gazed at the flames. Gusts of wind and rain rattled the window-sashes, and it seemed to Hecla that the sounds were like voices of the past. It had been part of the growth in her since her husband's departure that she had become more spiritual-minded. John Donovan had been an influence in this direction during his comforting visits following on David's death ; and Hecla's thoughts often dwelt on the possibilities of life after death. She wondered if the dead ever returned to visit the scenes they had loved. Did her father see her now? she asked herself ; and what did he think of the changes that had come to her and the home he had left her?

She was aroused from her reverie by her brother Jervis entering the room to bid her good night.

It had been her custom to go up stairs and sit with him while he prepared for bed; but the last time Lucia had been to see her she had accused her of spoiling the child; so she had reluctantly given up this motherly care of him.

She fancied that he left her to-night a little wistfully and her heart convicting her she followed him up stairs.

She found him asleep on his knees, fatigued with the long catalogue of requests he made nightly to his Maker. She aroused him; but after he was in bed he murmured: "I have forgotten something, Sister Hecla," and slipping out of the covers he once more knelt in prayer.

She sat beside him a long time in silence. At last she said softly: "Jervis, are you asleep?"

"No, Sister Hecla, I am wide awake."

"What makes you so quiet then?"

"I am wishing, and when I wish hard I see the things I want dropping down from Heaven."

"Are there so many things you want, Jervis?" Hecla asked a little forlornly.

He did not answer and she slipped one arm under his pillow and laid her cheek against his. "Tell Sister Hecla," she whispered, "what you wish for most and perhaps she can give it to you."

She added hesitatingly: "Is it more companions—boys of your own age to play with? Are you lonely, Jervis, with only Sister Hecla?"

He was still silent and she continued: "Would you like to go to school, now you are such a big boy?"

"Yes, I'd like to go to school," he admitted after thinking about it.

"And leave me?" she faltered.

"I don't want to leave you," he answered, "but it would be nice to go to school like other boys."

"Are you sure?" she asked piteously.

He gravely nodded; but his hand stole out and clasped hers.

"Sister Hecla will think about it, then," she answered.

She sat on silent after that, holding his hand. She thought he must have fallen asleep when he made a slight stir.

"What is it, Jervis?"

"You wouldn't be so lonely if brother Richard wasn't dead like father, would you?"

"Brother Richard isn't dead, Jervis. You know I told you he had gone back to England."

"But you said he was dead the night you came back from Snow Shoe."

"How do you know that?" she asked him.

"Because I was looking down over the balusters. You said, 'Richard is dead to me,' and then you went and fixed the hands of the clock, and they have always been that way, just as they stood still when father died. You looked so strange I went back to bed."

"But I did not mean he was dead like father, Jervis. I only meant that he had gone away in a ship and would never come back."

"In the same ship that brought him?"

"What ship do you mean, little brother?"

"That is just make believe, Sister Hecla. I mean the ship on the clock that used to sail and sail and never

went any more after father died. I used to wonder who was sailing in it. Then brother Richard came across the sea; and I said the ship brought him. I often think of things like that, Sister Hecla."

"You are always thinking, aren't you, Jervis?"

"Yes, that is why I sit by myself. I often think about brother Richard, don't you, Sister Hecla?"

"Yes," she faltered, "I think about him very often, Jervis."

"Why did brother Richard go away?" he asked after a pause.

"Because—don't ask Sister Hecla why. Perhaps because she wasn't good to him."

"But you're sorry and you'd be good to him if he came back, wouldn't you?" the child went on relentlessly.

"Yes, Sister Hecla would try to be good to him."

"And won't he ever come back?"

"I am afraid not, dear."

"Don't you want him to come back?"

"Jervis, don't, don't," Hecla whispered brokenly. "Yes, Sister Hecla wants him to come back very, very much."

"Then I'll ask God to send him back," Jervis answered and he got out of bed and knelt at her knee.

"Jervis, Jervis," she murmured over his curly little head, "don't you know you are breaking my heart?"

And as he clambered back into the sheets she leaned over and let her tears wet his cheek.

"I prayed about it, Sister Hecla," Jervis murmured sleepily, as he lay with her hand held tightly in his.

When at last he dropped into dreams, Hecla left him.

Descending the stairs into the gloomy hall she paused before the old hall clock. The hands still indicated the hour of twelve, where she had thrust them the night she received Richard's letter telling her of his departure for England.

Moved by an impulse she took the key and wound up the silent timepiece. She heard again with quickened heart-throb the familiar sound of its ticking as the pendulum swung to and fro and the little painted ship began rocking on the green waves above the dial.

"Come back," she said softly, "Richard, come back!"

And she stood watching how the little ship journeyed on.

At last she resented herself before the fire in the sitting-room. Her heart ached as she thought of Jervis. So she must lose him, too! This child, this Benjamin of her love, was she not making his life sad through the emptiness of the big house—the house she clung to despite the changes that the years had wrought?

She was presently startled by a knock on the front door. Visitors at night were rare now; so she asked nervously: "Who is it?"

"It's I, Wentworth."

"Oh, Wentworth," she said faintly, unbarring the door.

The thought had passed through her mind that it might be Richard—that already Jervis' little ship had brought him back to her.

Wentworth laid aside his hat and dripping umbrella.

"How wet you are!" she exclaimed. "How good of you to come to see me on such a bad night! But there is a fire in the sitting-room—one of Noah's fires."

"Wentworth," she said to him when they were seated before the blaze, "I am glad you came to-night. I want to talk with you about Jervis. He is old enough now to go to school, isn't he? I have been foolish, perhaps, to keep on teaching him so long myself when he ought to have had the companionship of other boys."

"Why not send him to the Dunkirk Academy, then?"

"No, I think that wouldn't be the right place. Father, I am sure, would have wanted him to be brought up under Friends' influence. Often I fancy he has something of his grandfather's spirit in him and that he will become a minister of the Gospel. I was considering Westtown as the proper school—where Dave went before him."

"It will be hard for you to lose him."

"Hard? O Wentworth, the desolation of it!" And she sat straining her wide eyes into the fire, her hands clasped tightly on her lap. She was still in the mourning that she had put on for her brother and her face, a little thin, had gathered some lines. But she had still the beauty of perfectly cut features and her rich hair increased the delicacy of her fine skin. The pale face was flushed now from the glow of the flames; and in the warm light she looked her youth in spite of suffering and experience.

"Do you think," she continued, "that it can be managed? I mean can I afford it? You know how willing I am to sacrifice comforts so my little brother can have the schooling to make him a good and useful man."

"It won't be necessary to make sacrifices, Hecla. I am just back from Moshannon Hall and Mr. Markham said to tell you that the coal mining company would

make you a good offer for the wild land you own near Snow Shoe. I had forgotten that your father left you any such property, but looking over the list of his real estate I saw that it was not only put down but marked, 'Valuable some day.' "

"Yes, father always had faith in Snow Shoe, and you know he was constantly dreaming that coal would be discovered somewhere on his lands."

"And his dreams have come true, Hecla. Time has proved how rich the coal fields there are, and since the railroad has opened out the region property within miles of Snow Shoe is becoming daily more valuable. The sale of that piece of wild land will put you in easy circumstances again. Mr. Markham says the company offers you twenty thousand dollars."

"Wentworth, I am so glad of it for Jervis' sake! I feel it was through me that he lost his inheritance. When I look out and see that waste of water before my door and remember how the old furnace used to redden the sky over the hills at casting hour, the sense of change comes back to me as if it had all happened only yesterday. And when father died he believed he had left his children an ample fortune. Ah, if the Works could have been kept in the family! It seems like blaming Dave; and I don't blame him, for he did his best. Poor David! Yet if the Works had gone on running until Jervis grew up, he might have become an iron-master like father! When," she asked, "does Mr. Markham expect to start the new furnace?"

"Very shortly now, I believe. You know his opinion is that the old charcoal furnace has seen its day; that the cost of producing metal by that method was too

high to make it a paying investment any longer. So he has turned the Hecla into a coke furnace, with the new mechanical appliances that permit of making iron in much larger quantities at a much cheaper rate. The discovery of coal so near at hand has been an immense advantage in connection with the furnace. The Hecla is bound to be a great success. The town is confident of prosperity, with all the new enterprises in the air."

"And Mr. Markham gets all the credit, Wentworth, when it is to Richard's genius and faith in Snow Shoe that Dunkirk really owes everything. That is the injustice of life!"

"It is human nature to forget. Your husband left Dunkirk and Mr. Markham has stayed and carried out his schemes and ideas."

Hecla sighed, her eyes fixed on the flames. Wentworth, after watching her for a moment, said:

"You miss him, Hecla?"

"I am lonely," she answered. "And when I think of Jervis' going away to Westtown, my courage fails me. Oh, how shall I bear it?"

And suddenly shaken by uncontrollable emotion she buried her face in her palms.

The fire had fallen away to red embers and the warm dusk of the room was rich with the fragrance of balsam and burnt wood. Hecla was an appealing figure as she sat there, the shine of the hearth on her hands and hair. Wentworth leaned toward her. "Hecla," he said, "Hecla!"

Startled at the passion in his voice she drew herself quickly out of his encircling arm. "Hecla," he breathed as their eyes met, "I love you!"

He was on his knees beside her chair and his breath was against her cheek. But she repulsed him with the strength of her indignation, and, rising, stood looking down upon him in silence.

With something like wonder Hecla asked herself why she had ever preferred Wentworth to Richard. She saw her cousin now not through her imagination and girlhood's heart, but in the disillusioning light of her new feelings for her husband. Richard's many claims to her affection crowded upon her, and it was with a fresh sense of their relative worth that she compared the two men. During the year Richard Hallett had been away Hecla's emotions had undergone a revolution. Her husband's image had gradually filled Wentworth's place in her heart. It came partly from the changed relations of Richard toward her. As his position had altered so had her feelings altered. Once he had represented duty—the man she had not wished to marry but whom circumstances had forced upon her and bade her love—just as Wentworth had stood for sentiment—the lover that could never be hers. Now it was different. Richard demanded nothing of her and she gave him all. Hecla's reaction was not caprice—it was only human nature.

Wentworth stood miserably facing her. "Hecla, forgive me," he said. Then as she did not reply: "I am going."

"Wait," she said, "don't go, Wentworth, until I tell you that I have nothing to forgive. You haven't meant to forget the respect you owe another man's wife. You have been too good to me all these years for me ever to feel unkindly toward you. If there were anything to

pardon I should gladly pardon it. No, you have done me a service rather than a wrong. I think I must have gone on caring for you until to-night, and that was the reason I did not appreciate my husband or give him the love I owed him. But I know now I love him as I never did and never could love you. It may be too late; I may never see him again; but it will make no difference. No matter how old I grow it will be his memory that will help me to live."

She put out her hand, gazing at him with emotion for her husband in her eyes. "Wentworth," and her voice was full of gentleness, "forget to-night. And forget that you ever loved me. But I need not say it. Now that you know I love Richard your feeling for me will pass."

"Good-by," he said, "it is better we should not see each other any more."

"Yes, it is better," she answered.

She stood before the dying fire, one hand resting on the white wooden mantel-piece.

She heard him take his umbrella from the rack, fumble over the difficult latch, and then the sound of the closing door fell on her ear.

At the sound the memory of that other parting came back to her—the going away of Richard Hallett into the night of the garden, never to return.

And it seemed to Hecla, as she stared into the embers, that she had been set apart by fate to bear more than it was the lot of most women to bear.

On the hearth the last sparks blinked and died out, leaving the room in darkness.

But she did not move.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE END SOOTHES ALL THE CURSE OF THE BEGINNING

Owing to his large business interests of the last few years Mr. Trevis Markham had found it convenient to move to Dunkirk and consequently Hecla saw much of her old school friend, Rhoda. Rhoda Markham's healthy, cheerful character made her a welcome visitor at Burnham, and she did more than any one else at this time to brighten Hecla's life, which was more desolate than ever now that Jervis had been sent to Westtown. Wentworth, Hecla no longer saw—the sale of the wild land at Snow Shoe and other legal matters he attended to for her called only for correspondence between them; so with Harmony living in a western mission and Hetty still traveling in Europe, Hecla was deprived of the companionship upon which she had most depended in the past. Her Aunt Seaborn Oliver occasionally made her one of her tearful calls; and her distant cousin Jane Hamilton "ran out," as she put it, now and then for a chat; but these and more formal visitors scarcely represented appreciable reliefs to her loneliness, and it was Rhoda's society that gave her the most pleasure.

It was on a crisp Sunday late in November, with a high blue heaven and sturdy sunshine, that Hecla heard the

sound of carriage wheels before the house. Going to the door she saw it was the Markhams' coach containing Rhoda wrapped in furs, her cheeks crimson as an autumn leaf and her eyes sparkling.

"Hecla," she called out, "you know the furnace is going to be lighted this morning and I want you to drive out with me and grace the occasion. You'll come, won't you?"

"Why, yes, I'll come, Rhoda," Hecla agreed, not without an effort.

The request seemed to her a little inconsiderate, taking into account what emotions must naturally be excited in her heart at the sight of her father's old furnace starting again under the auspices of the Markhams. She had conquered the human feelings that had first arisen at the thought of Mr. Markham enjoying the position of iron-master, which had once been her father's and afterward her brother David's. Bitterness over the prosperity of the Markhams founded on the ruin of her own fortune was, she told herself, unworthy of her. Nevertheless, she felt a sharp heart-ache as she got into the carriage to drive out and witness the inauguration of Hecla Furnace under its new management.

Rhoda talked with more than her usual animation, Hecla thought, as the carriage rolled along the road in the direction of the Works; nor did she appear to notice that her own interest in the ceremony to take place that morning was met by some restraint on the part of Joshua Sandwith's daughter.

Hecla looked out of the window, watching the familiar objects as they passed. They came to the bowl of hills where clustered the rolling-mill and forge at the

foot of the dam. By the wayside was the low white-washed building—half office and half supply store, and opposite it, set back high above the road, the old Sandwith homestead still occupied as a boarding-house by Mrs. Littlepage and now Clover's home again since the death of David. All were family landmarks, associated with a hundred thoughts of her father and brother, and Hecla as she gazed at them remembered the last lighting of the furnace to which she had driven that calm Sunday morning in May, four years ago. Alas, what changes had taken place in those four years! What breaking of ties, tragedies, material reverses had marked like milestones the slow passage of time!

They reached The Bank, as the row of limestone cottages was called. There was Christy Pickle's little home with its window-ledges lined with geraniums in glasses and broken pitchers and the tiny yard in front. Hecla had a quick painful memory of her first meeting with Richard, the evening she had gone to see Christy's night-blooming cereus. The old woman, rigid as usual in her rusty black Sunday garments, was just pushing open the rickety cottage gate, the same huge hymn-book in her grasp; she was on her righteous way to the Evangelical chapel on the hill a half-hour before services according to her established practice. Hecla bade Rhoda stop the carriage that she might greet the stern arbiter of other people's manners and morals. Time had brought grief to Christy also. Her fat philosophic spouse Mog had died during the summer past and his dust now reposed in the Sandwith burying-ground on the pine-guarded hilltop overlooking Dunkirk, for Joshua Sandwith had made provision in his will that his old work-

men might have the right of sepulture there in token of his affection.

"I was so sorry to hear of Mog's death, Christy," Hecla said as she gave her hand to the old woman.

"Yes, he's dead an' gone, lyen' up there on the hill aside a thet fust wife a hizen. He wanted to rest 'tween her an' me an' Ah dun wot he said. He's there with her on one side an' a place fer me on t'other. But Ah got ta thinken' an' Ah couldn't stand it, so Ah up and put a fence round him and whur Ah'll lie. He didn't say nuthen' agen' that an' Ah don't want ta feel like no Mormon critter thet never had a whole man to herself. She warn't sinful like Ah be. But sinnen' er no sinnen' Ah dun more'n she dun, saven' his wages an' gitten' him away from fights a Saturday night. An' Ah'm mighty glad a that there fence 'tween him and her. My! w'en Ah thinks a how set up she is in Heaven with his sperit to herself Ah'd like to die jest to go up there and spite her! Well, Heckly's starten' up agen an' Ah hopes she'll hev better luck 'n she had the last time Dave run her." And Christy strode on.

The furnace was reached presently, and they dismounted among the crowd of workmen gathered to witness the lighting. Mr. Markham, as he shook hands with Hecla, said heartily: "So Rhoda brought you as she promised, Mrs. Hallett! We should all have been disappointed if Joshua Sandwith's daughter hadn't come to see Hecla Furnace start up again."

At the entrance of the casting-shed Hecla beheld many familiar faces. There was Solomon Stitch, his great dolphin physiognomy as lugubrious as of old; Uncle Billy Spotts, the county's famed nonagenarian,

displaying his two yellow cuspids as he smiled his recognition; Whispering Willy, the flint-picker, working his pantaloons up and down in hoarse-breathing excitement; lame Joe, the jigger-boss. There, too, was Archy McSwords, now the proud possessor of Alpharetta's hand; with the lady standing close by, her knot of brass-colored hair hidden by a bright new hood. All showed their pleasure at seeing Hecla, for all took it to heart that such heavy misfortunes should have befallen the family of their old master. Many a rough grimy hand grasped hers as she made her way toward the shed.

"Mrs. Hallett," Mr. Markham said, "I have a request to make of you. We want you to do the honors of the occasion by applying the torch to the hearth."

"I, Mr. Markham?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Why, it is Rhoda's place to do that!"

"No," he answered, smiling, "it is the place of Joshua Sandwith's daughter to light her father's old furnace."

"Father," Rhoda said impulsively, "don't keep her in the dark any longer. Hecla,"—and she kissed her affectionately,—“we planned a surprise for you to-day. The furnace doesn't belong to us at all. Your husband asked father to bid it in in his name. Mr. Hallett is inside the casting-shed, waiting for you.” And with a happy laugh she gave Hecla a little push forward.

They were at the entrance of the shed. The interior was shadowy despite the bars of sunlight that fell slantingly from the clearstory. Richard Hallett stood near the great crucible which had taken the place of the primitive hearth, talking to Jerry Brown the founder. Hecla, as she recognized her husband, felt slowly a faintness come upon her. She put out her hand to

catch hold of Rhoda; but Rhoda had slipped away. With her heart quickened almost to suffocation she moved slowly on over the soft sand floor. When quite near she stopped, unable to go farther. Now Richard looked up and saw her, a black-robed figure, standing there gazing at him.

"Hecla!" he cried, coming forward. Then as he took her in his arms: "My wife!"

"Yes," she said, tears choking her, "your wife at last. Oh, Richard, Richard, you have come back to me!"

"It was my doing," he said as they walked back to Burnham. "I mean this meeting at the new coke furnace. It seemed to me it stood for the uniting of those very interests that once helped to keep us apart. Hecla, when you put the torch to the hearth to-day you kindled a fire that burns up that old misunderstanding of ours. Let us think of the hearth as the new altar of our married life!"

"But Richard, the hearth has to be renewed each year and the fire of our love will burn on always!"

"No," he smiled back, "the difference between the new coke furnace and your father's old one is that the fire does not have to be put out."

Slowly they walked along the familiar roadside, pine-shaded, and fringed still with ghostly remnants of autumn's wealth. Here and there gleamed late stars of the purple aster—stalks forgotten by the November chill. The morning had broken crisp with frost, but as the sun mounted a warmth pervaded the day—last flash of Indian summer ere the world sank to wintry death.

Little had been said on the way—much understood. Almost it seemed that explanations were unnecessary after the embrace which had united Richard and Hecla, and made them husband and wife, in new and nobler sense. In that moment of heart communion the great question had been asked and answered; doubts of each other had been dissipated; a serene sense of possession had entered into their understanding and havened them round with peace. The confident, tonic morn filled their spirits like a revelation of life's rich and hardy promises. Hecla's cheeks were touched with color—glow of autumn and of love; she had thrown back her heavy veil; her hand rested on Richard's arm. Wayfarers noting them felt the atmosphere of happiness they distilled and smiled their sympathy.

Reaching the point in the highway where the path led past the Meeting House, and tempted by the quiet within the walled inclosure, they pushed open the rust-grown wicket and sat side by side on the old stone steps worn by the feet of Hecla's Quaker forebears. The deserted building had remained as before, undesecrated; it had not been sold by Gideon Sandwith, convicted as he had been in that first hour of possession of the sin of greed. For a while the two sat silent, basking in the oily sunlight, soothed by the mumuring of the mountain pines that sentineled the Meeting House door. At last Hecla spoke in the new voice which expressed the newly-born, happier woman. Her slender gloved hands clasped in her lap the sheaf of asters that her husband had pulled for her on their walk; her heart was in the eyes that gazed toward the neighboring hill-top, where her father slept his last sleep.

"Richard, do you realize all it means to me to have you back? I feel as if I were beginning life afresh. So often it is denied us to retrieve the past. Father would have been so glad of this. Dear father! He was so wise—he knew me better than I knew myself. It was he who planned the happiness I so nearly forfeited by my blindness."

He drew her lips to his, and as she yielded herself willingly to his kiss, she went on:

"You have so much to forgive, Richard,—so much to forget. Wounds heal, but what scars they leave! You won't remember how I treated you—but I shall remember; remember always. Oh, if I had nothing to look back upon and regret! I suppose that is the great sadness of caring—the real caring that comes at last, after so much groping, so many mistakes. I should give anything, Richard,—years out of my life,—if only I had not wronged you, been so unkind! You mustn't think I lived on with no impulse to tell you all that was in my heart—how deep my repentance, my sorrow, was. Often, often I had the wish to write—to say so; but I conquered the desire. I thought how empty my words would seem to you—how difficult it would be for you to believe me. And so I remained silent."

"And my silence, Hecla, my staying away—do you think that was easy for me? It cost me a great deal to send no message—not to come back to you. But I felt that after all it was best—best that I should have gone; best that I should have stayed away; and I felt that letters would only trouble you. But how my tenderness and longing for you grew! All the angry pride that made me leave America melted away. I regretted hav-

ing been so hard with you about the furnace and I felt that, perhaps, I had done wrong not to give up the mine, as you asked me to do."

"No, no, Richard, you did right to refuse. I should never have forgiven myself if you had yielded to me against your sense of duty and honor. I see it all now with other eyes, and I love you the more for acting fairly toward Mr. Markham." Tears gathered as she added: "I can't believe I was so blind—that I was so selfish. Richard, Richard—"

She could not finish. Drawing her closer he said tenderly:

"Hecla, you blame yourself too much. I was at fault as well as you. You couldn't help not loving me. I should never have persuaded you into marriage before you cared for me."

"Yes, marriage under such conditions was a mistake, Richard. But it was I who should have known that; I who should never have consented. When I look back on all that, I blush at my crudeness, my ignorance, my desecration of sacred things. What mistakes I committed in the name of duty! How cold-hearted, how calculating I was to marry you!"

"But, Hecla, it was not for yourself; it was for your brother that you made the sacrifice."

"Yes, it was for Dave. Poor, poor Dave! Oh, Richard, when the water washed his dead body to my feet I felt that my sorrow was more than I could bear. But at last I think I read the lesson of it aright—just as I did the failure of the furnace." Then, with brighter look: "The furnace that you saved after all. To think that it was my husband who bought it in!"

"It seemed like deceiving you; but I only kept the purchase secret because I feared you would resent owing anything to me. I had to buy the furnace, dear. It was the one thing I could do for you—the effort at reparation for having refused to take charge of the business. And I confess I hoped that through the furnace I might also in the end win your love. For I never gave up my determination to win you. Hecla, I had expected that marriage would bring happiness to our lives. Instead, it brought you only distress and the feeling that I was always reproaching you. I did not put out my love at interest in marrying you, Hecla; but it is inevitable that love asks for love. I thought I was capable of an affection that asked no return. But I discovered I was too human for that."

"I am glad that you proved human, Richard. Otherwise I might perhaps never have grown to love you."

"But you love me now, Hecla?"—smiling his confidence in her eyes.

"My life henceforward will be an effort to prove it," she answered quietly. "But bear with me for a while. I am still so ignorant of love. Ah, Richard, you must teach me to be the wife I want to be. All I ask is that you will take my love and make it worthy of you."

"You will hardly recognize the old place," she said, as they were nearing Burnham; "it is so changed—so stripped of its beauty. That is my punishment for clinging to it when I should have gone to Snow Shoe."

"We shall make Burnham as beautiful as ever it was," he said comfortingly. "The dam can be drained and a new grove of black walnuts planted. We shall watch them grow together!"

"No, let the dam stay, Richard. Nobody can wipe out the past."

"But with love one can create a happier future."

"Ah, Richard, *many waters can not quench love; nor can the floods drown it*. When I think how I treated you I wonder that you could keep on loving me. Yet," she added with tender reproachfulness, "you left me!"

"I left you because I loved you, Hecla. If I had stayed you might never have cared for me. And, remember, I said that I should never give up—that I should win you in the end."

"But you said you would never come back until I asked it!"

"You did ask it, Hecla. I felt your love calling me across the seas."

"Then it was not Wentworth's letter!"

For Wentworth had written to Hallett of Hecla's loneliness and need of her husband's return.

"No," he said, "the letter I got from Wentworth only proved that what I felt was true."

"Oh, it was the message I sent you the night I wound up the old hall clock and started the little ship rocking again. Yes, it was Jervis' ship that brought you! Jervis' ship!"

That night they were standing at the window when the black sky over the distant hills reddened with the first cast made by the furnace.

"Look," Richard said, "the new Hecla! How much brighter the glow is."

"Yes," she echoed softly; "the new Hecla! May she do as much to brighten your life, Richard!"

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